



Understanding Microaggressions in Learning Environments

Microaggressions are verbal, behavioral, or environmental actions that communicate hostility toward the targeted group either intentionally or unintentionally (Sue et al., 2007). Microaggressions can target many aspects of one's identity, including race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, mental health, or socioeconomic backgrounds. This resource provides insights on the adverse effects of microaggressions on the targeted group and on microaggressions in academic settings.

Adverse Effects on the Targeted Group

The adverse effects of microaggressions are immense regarding physical and mental health. Experiencing microaggressions can impact the well-being of marginalized groups negatively provoking mental anguish, negatively affecting their self-esteem, and jeopardizing academic success (Nadal et al., 2014). Furthermore, microaggressions often lead to stereotype threats, i.e., confirming negative stereotypes about an individual's racial, ethnic, gender, or cultural group. College students have reported decreased self-esteem, self-efficacy, and worthiness, all of which augment an individual's ability to succeed and overcome challenges. Additionally, microaggressions increase the risks of depression, stress, trauma, and anxiety for the targeted group.

Recognizing Microaggressions in Academic Settings

Microaggressions can target diverse ranges of identities of a person including race, ethnicity, gender expression, sexuality, nationality, citizenship, religion, ability, and socioeconomic status. It is essential to understand the different forms microaggressions can take to recognize them in the moment (Sue & Spanierman, 2020).

1. Microinsults: Behaviors, actions, or verbal remarks that convey rudeness, insensitivity, or demean a person's or group's social identity or heritage
2. Assuming people's intelligence or ability by their appearances
3. "You have a strong accent, but your vocabulary is impressive", "You don't look disabled", "Your English is so good"
4. "It's so nice to see a woman can handle such a challenging subject!"
5. Continuing to mispronounce the names of students after they have corrected the person repeatedly. Not willing to listen closely to and learn the pronunciation of a name.
6. Microinvalidations: Actions that exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of people who represent a different group
7. Denial of race/racism
8. "I don't see color; I treat everyone the same", "America is a melting pot"
9. Expecting individuals to represent the perspective of the underrepresented groups
10. "You're a woman, what do you think of this gender issue?"
11. Always asking the same faculty of color to serve on diversity committees

12. Devaluing expertise, experiences, or culture
13. Ignoring the existence, histories, and cultures of other people
14. Not including scholarship written by minority scholars
15. Microassaults: Explicit slights or insults meant to hurt the victim, which include name-calling, and purposeful discriminatory actions
16. Jokes that mock racial/ethnic, gender, or disabled groups
17. The use of racial epithets

References

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