

### **Definitions of Microaggressions**

Microaggressions are defined as “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory or negative racial slights and insults that potentially have harmful or unpleasant psychological impact on the target person or group.” (Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000)

Microinsults are behaviors, actions, or verbal remarks that convey rudeness, insensitivity, or demean a person’s group or social identity or heritage. (Sue, et. al. 2007)

Microinvalidations are actions that exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings or experiential reality of people who represent different groups (Sue, et. al. 2007).

Microaggressions cut across all social identities including race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, disability status, socio-economic class, and other important social dimensions. At DU, these insults and invalidations also occur across all majors, departments, and colleges.

### **Examples of Microaggressions**

- Continuing to mispronounce the names of students after they have corrected you time and time again.

*“Is Jose Cuinantila here?” “I am here, but my name is Jesús Quintanilla.”*

- Scheduling tests and project due dates on religious or cultural holidays.

*“It has just been pointed out to me that I scheduled the mid-term during Rosh HaShanah, but we are Ok because I don’t see any Jewish students in the class.”*

- Setting low expectations for students from particular groups or high schools in Denver.

*“Oh, so Robert, you’re from Montbello High? You are going to need lots of academic help in my class!”*

- Calling on and validating men and ignoring women students during class discussions.

*“Let’s call on John again. He seems to have lots of great responses to some of these problems.”*

- Using inappropriate humor in class that degrades students from different groups.

*“Anyone want to hear a good ethnic joke? Ok, well there was a Jew, a Mexican, and a Black. The Mexican says to the...”*

- Expressing racially charged political opinions in class assuming that the targets of those opinions do not exist in class.

*“I think illegal aliens are criminals because they are breaking the law and need to be rounded up and sent back to Mexico.”*

- Hosting debates in class that place students from groups who may represent the minority opinion in class in a difficult position.

*“Today we are going to have a debate on immigration. I expect the three Latino students and a few of you to argue in favor of immigration. The rest of you will provide arguments against immigration.”*

- Denying the experiences of students by questioning the credibility and validity of their stories.

*“I’ve eaten and shopped plenty of times in West Denver and it’s nothing like you describe it. How long have you lived there and who are you hanging out with?”*

- Assigning class projects that are heterosexist, sexist, racist, or promote other oppressions.  
*“For the class project, I want you to think about a romantic relationship that you have had with a member of the opposite sex. Think and write about your observations.”*
- Using heterosexist examples or sexist language in class.  
*“Atoms sometimes attract each other like this male and female here. At the same time, atoms sometimes repel each other like these two males here.”*
- Assigning projects that ignore differences in socioeconomic class status.  
*“For this class, you are required to visit four art galleries located in the downtown area. The entrance fees vary but I am sure you can afford it.”*
- Singling students out in class because of their backgrounds.  
*“You’re Asian! Can you tell us what the Japanese think about our trade policies?”*
- Assuming that all students are from the U.S and fully understand the English language and culture (i.e., be aware that there may be International students in the class).  
*“What do you mean you have never heard of The Cosby Show? Where have you been hiding?”*
- Discouraging students from working on projects that explore their own social identities.  
*“If you are Native American, I don’t want you to write your paper on Native Americans. You already know everything about that group and besides you will be biased in your writing.”*
- Asking people with hidden disabilities to identify themselves in class.  
*“This is the last time that I am going to ask. Anybody with a disability who needs extra help, raise your hand!”*
- Ignoring student-to-student microaggressions, even when the interaction is not course-related.  
*“Don’t be retarded! That party this weekend was so gay.”*
- Making assumptions about students and their backgrounds:
  - Assuming that all Latino students speak Spanish.  
*“You’re Latino and you don’t speak Spanish? You should be ashamed of yourself!”*
  - Assuming that all Asians are good at math.  
*“I know who I’m calling on a lot to work some of the math problems in this class – Mr. Nguyen!”*
  - Assuming that all African Americans know about poverty and the “Ghetto.”  
*“Mr. Summers! We just read about poverty among Blacks in America. Does this fit your experience and can you tell us about it?”*
  - Assuming that all Native Americans are knowledgeable about the 500 plus diverse tribes that exist in the U.S.  
*“Many Native American tribes are in favor of using casinos to increase revenues and many others are against it. Mr. Begay, as a Navajo, what are your thoughts?”*

Assuming that all Jewish students are well versed in the Israeli –Palestinian conflict and history and that they all have the same opinions about that complex situation.

*“Oh, you’re Jewish! Can you tell us about what the Israelis think about Jewish settlements in the West Bank?”*

- Assuming the gender of any student. Moreover, continuing to misuse pronouns even after a student, transgender or not, indicates their preferred gender pronoun to you.

*“I would like for Mike to share her stories related to her life as a young woman growing up in New York City.”*

- Assuming all students fit the traditional student profile and are proficient in the use of computers.

*“All you millennials are on Facebook, I will post the invite for the class project on the site.”*

- Disregarding religious traditions or their details. For example, Ramadan involves fasting from sunrise to sundown, so pressuring observant students to attend a food-focused event is disrespectful.

*“I am inviting you all over to my house for dinner after class next week to discuss your projects. Ali, I know its Ramadan, but hope you’ll join us anyway.”*

- Forcing students with non-obvious disabilities to “out” themselves or discuss them publically.

*“If anyone has a disability, raise your hand right now so that we can make special accommodations for you.”*

## Student Affairs Examples

### Frat boys

*“Monday staff meetings are really just reports on hazing and alcohol from the Greeks.”*

### Athletes

*“If we could just get anyone from Athletics to cooperate, we could do rape prevention education that is so desperately needed.”*

### Using old names for organizations/buildings/etc.

*“I still call it the Black Student Union/Gay Services/Women’s Center/Hispanic Studies/etc./ - they call it something else now, but I don’t care.”*

*“And of course we support our GLB...Q...G...T... ABCDE-- you know, the whole alphabet of students!”*

### Funding allocations

*"I know that you are under funded compared to the other offices in the division, but feel free to collaborate with other services on campus."*

### Ability

*"Do I need a microphone? If you can't hear me without it, just stand near the front of the room or raise your hand."*

### Theme month programming

*"We have already done XXX programming this year. We do that every (insert month)."*

### Mandatory fun for co-workers

*"Tomorrow night after work, we are all going to go bowling together. Please invite your spouse. No children please – lets just have some fun together."*

### Drive personal cars

*"To save money, we are asking folks to car pool to the retreat center."*

*"Asking staff to ride in the bus or drive 15 passenger vans to retreat centers and supervisor takes personal car."*

### Wear university clothing

*"For Welcome Week, staff must wear university branded clothing each day."*

*When providing campus attire, providing only men's cuts or women's cuts (rather than taking individual orders of what people prefer simply for comfort), or only ordering plus sizes when asked or putting someone one spot publically: Do you need a two or three X, Dave?*

### Pot lucks assuming people have something to bring?

*“Once a month we will have an office pot luck. Everyone is to bring a dish to share with the entire staff.”*

Holiday parties

*Having a holiday party in late December.*

Eating disorder programming/resources for women only

*Placing Eating Disorder materials in women’s bathrooms only (condom’s in men’s bathrooms only).*

Recruit diverse staff/student leaders (overlooking diversity that is present)

*“We need to make a conscious effort to bring in XXX. This is the answer to our diversity issues on campus.”*

Hiring/selection committees

*Over tasking and/or tokenizing a colleague or student of color (or subordinated group) over and over again*

Tokenization of services

Placing all responsibility of a situation into a silo of services – An gay student of color is killed by a hit and run accident in front of a fraternity house. This is a greek issue? Multicultural Student Service issue? LGBT Services issue? Alcohol Education issue, Parking issue?

Documentation assumptions, voting, travel I don’t understand this

*“As part of our professional development retreat we will be spending the weekend across the river in Canada – so don’t forget your passport.”*

*“Let’s all go to the voting booth together during our lunch break.”*

*Sending a student worker to the next county to pick up a donation from a casino.*

Diversity officer/committee

*"Isn't this why we hired/have you? Handle it."*

Welfare/poverty

*Setting up community service projects in local lower income neighborhoods and processing with participants afterwards about what it was like to be in spaces like that.*

HIV educational programming – health center vs. lgbt center

*There has been a decrease in HIV related educational programming on campuses because health centers think LGBT centers are doing it and LGBT Center feel it confirms a stereotype.*

Timing of programs

*Food festivals, large scale campus programming, during Ramadan at the beginning of the academic year.*

Retreats/programs during holidays

*"This is the only weekend that really works – others are too close to Easter or Spring Break."*

*"The university library will be closed for a week in observance of Easter."*

Floating vacation days for non-christian holidays

*Asking employees to use floating holiday's or "comp time" for their religious observances.*

Family trees – family histories, birthday celebrations

*“For our team builder, we are going to draw out our family trees as far as we can and share our stories and family traditions with each other.”*

Dietary needs/food restrictions

*“Can you just take the cheese off?” “Eat around the chunks of beef.”*

*“Ordering food that someone can’t eat over and over again in the office for working lunches.”*

Staff not allowed to support greek organizations or other groups they may identify with

*A university no longer supports fraternity and sorority involvement on campus and bans all staff from serving as an advisor or collaborating with these off campus organizations for programming.*

Assumption of masters in student affairs or knowledge of student development theory

*Dropping names of theorists or asking how someone got into student affairs without a student affairs degree? Without a masters?*

Multiple Identities

*In service spaces where multiple identities are being addressed that students of color are search for race/ethnic services and white students are seeking out sexuality and gender resources.*

Divisions of staff classifications

*“Why don't we meet for lunch at the faculty club? Oh.... That won't work.”*