

Racial Microaggressions Perpetuate Inequity

Definition:

Racial microaggressions are brief and commonplace daily statements, actions, or incidents, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color because they belong to a racial minority group (Sue, Capodilupo, Torino, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal, & Esquilin, 2007).

- Everyone, including marginalized group members, harbors biases and prejudices and can act in discriminatory and hurtful ways toward others.
- People who use microaggressions are often unaware that they engage in such communications when they interact with people of color.

Impact:

- Microaggressions are detrimental to persons of color; they impair performance in a multitude of settings by sapping the psychic and spiritual energy of recipients and by creating inequities (Franklin, 2004; Sue, 2004).
- A study with African Americans found that the cumulative effects of microaggressions can be devastating (Solorzano et al., 2000), resulting in a negative racial climate and emotions of self-doubt, frustration, and isolation among those who experience them.
- The increase in stress hormones and sleep disruptions elicited by race-based stressors may contribute to the racial achievement gap between white students and students of color (Levy et al., 2016)

Actions:

What can you do about microaggressions?

When you're the target:

- Consider the context. What is your relationship with the microaggressor?
- Take care of yourself. Talk things over with peers and practice healthy sleep habits and other self-care strategies, such as mindfulness meditation
- Don't be fooled by microaggressions packaged as opportunities. Invitations to serve on committees, workgroups, etc. and thus overloading a few minority colleagues with all of the minority-related work.

When you're a bystander:

- Be an ally. Sometimes your voice can be heard even more powerfully than those of the people directly affected by microaggressions.
- Speak for yourself. Don't try to speak on behalf of the person who has experienced the microaggression; doing so can itself be a form of microaggression.

When you're the microaggressor:

- Try not to be defensive.
- Acknowledge the other person's hurt and apologize. Reflect on where the microaggression came from and how you can avoid similar mistakes in the future. Then take responsibility for increasing your understanding of your own privileges and prejudices.

(Source: Clay, 2017)

“Where were you born?”

The Message:

De Marco, A. C., Morgan, J. D., Ayankoya, B., LaForett, D. R., Franco, X., Morgan, W., & FPG's Race, Culture, and Ethnicity Committee. (2018, January). *Racial Microaggressions Perpetuate Inequity: An Infographic*. Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Available at: <http://fpg.unc.edu/sites/fpg.unc.edu/files/resources/other-resources/RacialMicroaggressionsPerpetuateInequity.pdf>

“You are so articulate!”

The Message:

For more on microaggressions and/or the racial inequity public awareness campaign from the RACE Committee at FPG: go.unc.edu/RacialEquity

“It's unusual for someone of your race to be intelligent.”

