



Microaggressions

By Lucía Quesada-Ramírez

This lesson plan provides instruction for running the EDI workshop Microaggressions. Relevant terminology around microaggressions and protected characteristics will be introduced. This will be followed by an explanation and an analogy on why microaggressions are harmful. There will be a video that illustrates the cumulative impact of microaggressions. Next, how to repair after committing a microaggression will be covered. The workshop will conclude with some everyday scenarios that portray microaggressions, and the audience will be asked some follow-up reflection questions about these.

Time and Notes:

Approximately 1 hr-1.5 hrs, depending on number of participants, and participation levels. One facilitator required, two facilitators recommended. Two to four people are required to act out the scenarios. The scenarios can be tailored for the audience (i.e. non-STEM/lab audiences) as long as the main idea behind them is kept.

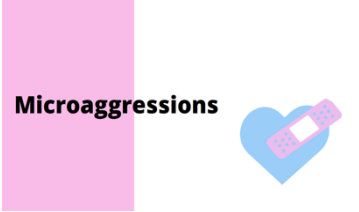
Slides: Please see link at <https://www.bioteach.ubc.ca/portfolio/equity-diversity-and-inclusion-projects/>

Learning Objectives:

1. Introduce relevant terminology around microaggressions and protected characteristics.
2. Reflect on the impact that microaggressions can have on individuals.
3. Learn how to repair after committing a microaggression.
4. Support participants in identifying microaggressions, avoiding them and stepping in when witnessing them.

Materials needed:

- 2-4 volunteers to act out scenarios
- Script for scenario dialogue (included in lesson plan)

 Microaggressions	- Introductory slide.
Land Acknowledgment UBC Vancouver is on the traditional, ancestral and unceded homelands of the Musqueam. We should aim to go beyond the protocol piece (acknowledging whose lands we're on), and commit to restorative, redistributive, and caring work. One way we will do this today is by reflecting on indigenous-specific microaggressions	- Land acknowledgment.
 Terminology	- Introduce terminology slide.
Marginalized groups: Those excluded from mainstream social, economic, cultural, or political life. These include, but are not limited to, groups excluded due to race, religion, political or cultural group, age, gender, or financial status. Protected characteristics: Personal characteristics for which the Human Rights code forbids discrimination. In BC: age, ancestry, colour, criminal conviction, family status, gender expression/identity, Indigenous identity, marital status, mental/physical disability, political belief, place of origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, and source of income (in tenancy). UBC VPRO ED Glossary BC Human Rights Tribunal	Marginalized Groups - Those excluded from mainstream social, economic, cultural, or political life. These include, but are not limited to, groups excluded due to race, religion, political or cultural group, age, gender, or financial status. Protected Characteristics - Personal characteristics for which the Human Rights code forbids discrimination. In BC: age, ancestry, colour, criminal conviction, family status, gender expression/identity, Indigenous identity, marital status, mental/physical disability, political belief, place of origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, and source of income (in tenancy).



Intersectionality: The intertwining of social identities such as gender, race, ethnicity, social class, religion, sexual orientation, and/or gender identity, which can result in unique experiences, opportunities, and barriers. UBC VPFO EDI Glossary	Intersectionality - The intertwining of social identities such as gender, race, ethnicity, social class, religion, sexual orientation, and/or gender identity, which can result in unique experiences, opportunities, and barriers.
What are microaggressions? Everyday slights and insults that communicate negative messages to target marginalized groups, often on a subconscious level. People experience microaggressions differently based on their intersectional identities. Tend to be brief and everyday occurrences UBC VPFO	What are microaggressions? - Everyday slights and insults that communicate negative messages to target marginalized groups, often on a subconscious level. - People experience microaggressions differently based on their intersectional identities. - Tend to be brief and everyday occurrences
Can include: • Comments • "Jokes" • Assumptions/Unconscious behaviours or gestures • Tone UBC VPFO	Can include: - Comments - "Jokes" - Assumptions/Unconscious behaviours or gestures - Tone
Why are they harmful? • They happen casually, frequently, and often without any harm intended, in everyday life — at school, in the workplace, etc. • Dealing with these on the daily can cause constant fatigue which can adversely affect health and career progression UBC VPFO American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers	Why are they harmful? - They happen casually, frequently, and often without any harm intended, in everyday life — at school, in the workplace, etc. - Dealing with these on the daily can cause constant fatigue which can adversely affect health and career progression
Note: Constant microaggressions from the same person directed to the same victim, can amount to discrimination according to the BC human rights tribunal! BC Human Rights Tribunal	Note: Constant microaggressions from the same person directed to the same victim, can amount to discrimination according to the BC human rights tribunal!
Analogy • Crumpled-up piece of paper: The crumpled-up piece of paper represents a person, and each crease represents a microaggression. Even if we try to straighten out the paper, the creases remain-- this represents the cumulative, and potentially traumatic, effect that microaggressions can have. • Paper cuts: A million tiny paper cuts have a cumulative effect, even if each paper cut on their own may seem insignificant. • Mosquito bites University of Colorado Denver	Analogy - Crumpled-up piece of paper: The crumpled-up piece of paper represents a person, and each crease represents a microaggression. Even if we try to straighten out the paper, the creases remain-- this represents the cumulative, and potentially traumatic, effect that microaggressions can have.

	- Paper cuts: A million tiny paper cuts have a cumulative effect, even if each paper cut on their own may seem insignificant. - Mosquito bites
Video 	This video illustrates the impact of microaggressions using the mosquito analogy.
Indigenous-specific microaggressions • Purposely interacting solely with white Canadians over Indigenous peoples in the spaces one occupies • Mispronouncing an Indigenous student's name once or multiple times, avoiding eye contact or not giving them the same attention as the other students • Being surprised that an Indigenous student is performing well and voicing that surprise to said student • Disregarding or invalidating the psychological effects and the experiences Indigenous peoples face due to racism Isabella Thurston – The Indigenous Foundation	Indigenous-specific microaggressions - Purposely interacting solely with white Canadians over Indigenous peoples in the spaces one occupies - Mispronouncing an Indigenous student's name once or multiple times, avoiding eye contact or not giving them the same attention as the other students - Being surprised that an Indigenous student is performing well and voicing that surprise to said student - Disregarding or invalidating the psychological effects and the experiences Indigenous peoples face due to racism
What to do if you commit one? 1. Own up to the mistake and listen attentively a. Avoid excuses b. Listen and validate 2. Apologize a. Offer genuine apology b. Acknowledge harm and impact UBC VFO	What to do if you commit one? - Own up to the mistake and listen attentively ○ Avoid excuses ○ Listen and validate - Apologize ○ Offer genuine apology ○ Acknowledge harm and impact



How to avoid committing them • Unpack biases. • Listen to those most oppressed, ignored, and silenced. • Interact with people who differ from you in terms of race, ethnicity, and culture. • Actively question stereotypes presented in the media. • Reflect on your own identity characteristics. UBC VPFO	How to avoid committing them - Unpack biases. - Listen to those most oppressed, ignored, and silenced. - Interact with people who differ from you in terms of race, ethnicity, and culture. - Actively question stereotypes presented in the media. - Reflect on your own identity characteristics.
 Scenarios	- Introduction to activity! - For this activity: - o Introduce the scenario and each character in it (i.e. say “In this scenario, volunteer 1 will be the supervisor, volunteer 2 will be the grad student, etc.) and state the setting of the scenario. - o Act out the scenario. - o Have participants discuss the scenario in small groups (2-3 people) for approximately 5 mins. - o After the 5 mins are up, ask the audience the reflection questions on the slide. - o Don’t be afraid of some silence, especially at the beginning. It can also be helpful to reframe the question and ask again if participation is low. - o Validate answers as appropriate, however, if at any point a participant argues in favour of the person who caused harm in the scenario, redirect discussion towards how the behaviour was harmful.
Scenario 1- Who’s in charge? • What happened? • Was there an assumption made, and if so what was it? • What view does this reinforce and why is it harmful?	- Scenario 1: Go over reflection questions. Redirect attention to harmful behaviour if anyone attempts to justify it or sides with the person who caused harm.



Scenario 2- Custodian? • What happened? • Was there an assumption made, and if so what was it? • Why was this harmful? • How could the harm be repaired? • If you witness this as a bystander, what would you do?	- Scenario 2: Go over reflection questions. Redirect attention to harmful behaviour if anyone attempts to justify it or sides with the person who caused harm.
Scenario 3- "Wife" • What happened? • Why was this harmful? • How could the harm be repaired? • What would be a supportive action that the other people in the room could take?	- Scenario 3: Go over reflection questions. Redirect attention to harmful behaviour if anyone attempts to justify it or sides with the person who caused harm.
Scenario 4- It's clearly a vacation • What happened? • Why was this harmful? • How could the harm be repaired?	- Scenario 4: Go over reflection questions. Redirect attention to harmful behaviour if anyone attempts to justify it or sides with the person who caused harm.
Scenario 5- At your age • What happened? • Why was the comment not a compliment? • What kind of assumptions should be avoided moving forward?	- Scenario 5: Go over reflection questions. Redirect attention to harmful behaviour if anyone attempts to justify it or sides with the person who caused harm.
Scenario 6- "Real" • What happened? • Why was this harmful? • How could the harm be repaired? • If you witness this as a bystander, what would you do?	- Scenario 6: Go over reflection questions. Redirect attention to harmful behaviour if anyone attempts to justify it or sides with the person who caused harm.
Scenario 7- Just budget • What happened? • Why was the comment harmful? • What kind of assumptions should be avoided moving forward?	- Scenario 7: Go over reflection questions. Redirect attention to harmful behaviour if anyone attempts to justify it or sides with the person who caused harm.
Scenario 8- Where did you grow up? • What happened? What assumption was made? • Why was this harmful? • If you witness this as a bystander, what would you do? • What was good about Sophie's response? What could be improved? • What steps were/can be taken by the person who committed the microaggression (two steps)?	- Scenario 8: Go over reflection questions. Redirect attention to harmful behaviour if anyone attempts to justify it or sides with the person who caused harm.

	- Question and Answer period. - Wrap up the workshop with a Q+A about the concepts introduced, but also include EDI questions/resources at large.
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Activity: Scenario dialogue

Scenario 1 (Sexism)

In this scenario, a woman will play the Principal Investigator and a man will play a grad student. They are both in the lab, when a third person walks in and looks around.

Third person (to man): Oh hi, are you the Principal Investigator in this lab?

Man (gestures to woman): No, she is. I'm a grad student.

Scenario 2 (Racism)

A racialized woman is in the lobby of the Michael Smith Labs (MSL). A non-MSL person walks in.

Non-MSL person: Hi, do you know how to get to the teaching lab?

Racialized woman: Yes, it's just straight ahead.

Non-MSL person: Thanks. Are you the custodian here?

Scenario 3 (Homophobia)

The lab members are discussing their plans for the weekend. In this scenario, one of the lab members is queer and has a same-sex partner.

Lab member 1: I'm going to a pumpkin patch this weekend.

Lab member 2: I'm just going to sleep in.

Queer lab member: Oh, I'm going to the arcade.

Lab member 2: Are you going on your own?

Queer lab member: No, I'm going with my husband.

Lab member 2: Oh riiight, your "husband" (rolls eyes).

Scenario 4 (Ableism)

Lab member who is disabled is just coming back from a four-month medical leave.



Able-bodied lab member: Oh, you're back!

Disabled lab member: Yes, I'm so happy to be back in the lab.

Able-bodied lab member: Really? I would be happy to go on a four-month vacation myself.
(laughs)

Scenario 5 (Ageism)

A younger lab member and an older lab member are discussing what they did over the weekend.

Older lab member: Yeah, the hike was five hours long, but the view was worth it.

Younger lab member: I'm just so impressed that you completed a hike like that at your age!

Scenario 6 (Transphobia)

In this scenario, one lab member 1 is a trans woman. She is having a conversation with lab member 2. Lab member 3 walks in.

Lab member 1: Yeah, so I was approved for hormone replacement therapy

Lab member 2: That's great!

Lab member 3 (to Lab member 1): Oh, I didn't realize you were trans. You look like a real woman.

Scenario 7 (Classism)

Lab tech and grad student are discussing how rent is unaffordable in the city. Faculty member walks in.

Grad student: It's been difficult being in a one-bedroom with the baby, but we can't afford to rent a bigger place.

Lab tech: Yeah, I hear you.

Faculty member: What?! I'd never be able to live in an apartment and not a house. I need a backyard. People should learn how to budget better.

Scenario 8 (Racism)

Three lab members are having a conversation.

Lab member 1: Yeah, I grew up in Türkiye



Lab member 2 (to Lab member 3): How about you, where are you from?

Lab member 3: Vancouver

Lab member 2: You know what I mean, like where are you really from?

Scenario 8b (Racism)

Lab member 3: Hey [Lab member 2's name], when you asked me the other day where I'm really from after I said I'm from Vancouver, it felt othering and like you were suggesting I must be a foreigner.

Lab member 2: Oh, I wasn't trying to suggest that. I'm really sorry, [Lab member 3's name]. I appreciate you trusting me enough to let me know.