

Q: I'm curious about your thoughts on Ibram X. Kendi's perspective that we should not discuss the concept of microaggressions because a) aggression is aggression, b) what may be micro to you may be macro to me, and c) it is a not racist concept vs. antiracist as it minimizes some assaults/insults, creating a hierarchy of sorts. I tend to agree. Why not talk about assaults and insults, period?

A: I get the perspective that he is advocating for as microaggressions can for sure have macro consequences as I believe I pointed out in the seminar. But I think the micro in the term refers to the amount of time involved in the event. I also believe that we need to do a better job of educating people about what the harms of these interactions are not just what they are as the consequences are the really important aspects of these things. I don't think we should really spend so much time trying to litigate what these things are called and focus more on the solutions for dealing with them. People that are skeptical of these events are going to be skeptical no matter what we call them and we need to focus on moving our institutions and departments as a whole to deal with these so that the hold outs are the anomaly not the rule.

Q: How do you appropriately inform students (and faculty) of unique opportunities that might be only available to them because they are PEERs? Could that be construed as a microaggression, even though it's meant to help?

A: As long as it isn't demeaning to the identity and the language used around it is positive and supportive you should be ok!

Q: In academia, many microaggressions take place in large classroom or meeting settings and due to their subtlety, interrupting them on site can seem like a massive derail of the subject for many people. How can we in academia make it easier or normalized to call out microaggressions in these large group mentor/student type settings?

A: I think it is important to address them, whether that is in the moment or later depends on the situation. I think it can be effective to point out the issue shortly and quickly in the moment and then address the larger implications later. This definitely takes practice in how to do this, especially ways to say it without turning it into a larger confrontation in the moment.

Q: Students working in labs must have a harder time reporting microaggressions. Sometimes it is the lab managers, supervisors or the PIs that is promoting the microaggression. What guidance would you give students to defuse the situation?

A: This is definitely tough and probably happens more than we would like to think. I think that visible allies in departments that may be able to help deal with these things and bring the issues to the right people can be helpful in this process. It can definitely be harder in a perhaps more isolating laboratory environment but I think if you develop a welcoming and inclusive department you can set up ways for these individuals to get support that they need.

Q: Is there value in faculty/staff connecting with students of shared identities to share strategies for coping with microaggressions in STEM? I can imagine how this could be problematic in different ways and also how helpful and validating it could be. If there is, what might be more effective ways to do this?

A: I think this is absolutely helpful. I think one way in which to do this without being too invasive of students is just sharing stories about your own experiences and how you dealt with them. Hopefully then your students will realize the areas in which you have been supported and achieved and may feel more comfortable doing the same.

Q: You note that the impact of microaggressions can build up to serious consequence. It seems that this can also be a problem for statements/situations that are not explicitly microaggressions, but where a history of aggressions (micro or macro(?)) and other systemic racism set up PEER (to borrow Asai's wonderful term) students to interpret things through that systemic lens. For example encouraging a student to think through alternative career paths (rather than say a beeline to medical school) could be heard differently by PEER versus majority students, even if race isn't implicitly or explicitly included. Are there ways to help formulate feedback in ways that not merely avoid microaggression, but maybe explicitly or positively frame to ensure that advice on career paths/course selection/study skills/etc. are not read incorrectly?

A: Woof, this is a tough one! I think by framing things positively and in the context of what the students want can be a good way to start approaching this. I think if we are being conscious about what we are saying and why we are saying it that it can go a long way. Are we listening to the students about what they want? Even if we don't think it is the best route for them? Are we leaving them room to explore other options without our pre-conceived judgements about what is best for them? I think if we keep those things in mind it can go a long way towards addressing some of those things.

Q: In "White Fragility", Robin DiAngelo speaks to how white people tend to react poorly to being called out in public or in front of others. How do you see that playing into your suggested solutions?

A: I don't think we can completely avoid this as I think everyone has a natural reaction to draw back a bit when confronted with something uncomfortable (no matter what their identity is). I think by framing what they said and talking about why it might be problematic instead of making it about the person can help somewhat. This is especially true if the person who said it is genuinely coming from a place of trying to help. I also think talking to the individual afterwards can go a long way into helping reduce some of those feelings.

Q: Can you discuss when/how it is "safe" to stop a microgression from happening? (e.g I am a POC in academia who often experiences microaggressions in STEM work settings. In our "new age"-"call out culture" it feels that often there is a tiering of acceptability by which those in power (i.e. of white background) are more socially welcome to stop microaggressions in

their tracks and be rewarded--while POCs might receive a negative stigma for the same behavior)

A: I have definitely experienced this myself so I understand the difficulty here. For me personally knowing that I have vocal allies in situations who will back me up when I say something so that my voice isn't the only one can be really helpful so that you don't feel like you are standing on a ledge all by yourself.

Q: I have noticed microaggressions in curriculum or teaching resources and am struggling with how and when to respond. As a recent example, there is an hour long video is a really helpful teaching tool, but it has what I think is a stereotype related microaggression in a 5 minute segment of the video. Do I not use the resource, tell the students ahead of time how I feel about the microaggression, or have a discussion afterwards about the microaggression? I'm noticing more and more of these things that I didn't notice before in curriculum.

A: I think addressing it before is definitely necessary as that way when students come across it they don't spend that cognitive time dealing with the issue but rather take the positive stuff from the content. I think if you have room for it afterwards that discussing the microaggression issue would be really effective as well.

Q: Where would "microcompliments" fit in such categories and how are they best handled? For example, "what a pretty grant" (actual comment that was obviously not about my grant) or "you are so 'articulate'" and such. These marginalize just as much, but any response runs the risk of a reply "why can't you just take a compliment?".

A; This one is very personal to me because I have heard the articulate one quite frequently in my life, but they are still microinsults even if the person saying them means them positively. For ones like these it's not about the intention of the speaker but how it affects the listener. For what it is worth I always answer the articulate one with a question. "Why would I not be articulate?" I think asking the speaker a question in these scenarios can be particularly effective because they often times become more aware of it being problematic when trying to explain.

Q: Would love for some discussion on this other attendees question - "I wonder how POC feel in groups where white people are discussing issues relating to them. Does confronting the Chair in the moment put minority faculty members in an uncomfortable situation?" I often wonder the same thing. Are we putting words in people's mouths when we don't know how they feel?

A: I think if you center your response in knowing that you are coming at this from an identity that isn't the one in question, recognize your own limitations in dealing with the issue, and are humble in your response it can go a long way.

Q: Campus climate surveys frequently mention judgement by peers as one of the things that negatively impact marginalized students most. It seems that some of the strategies we use to increase engagement (e.g. group work, think/pair/share, lab partners) can also force students

into situations where they are more subject to that peer judgement, or maybe just as bad the fear of that peer judgement even if it doesn't directly occur. Are there good strategies for utilizing student-student engagement in ways that both handle the potential for microaggressions but also acknowledge that even without explicit microaggressions that potential for peer judgement can be challenging for marginalized students?

A: This is a really important point and I think this comes back to what is the environment like in your course or department. Are you setting up group norms and situations in which students have the ability to come to you if they are uncomfortable? Are students involved in the process of becoming educated about these issues? I think these things can be really important to helping with some of these things.

Q: I am a grad student. My department put together a DEI committee without faculty or student input about grad student representation. The two appointed grad student representatives are white cis females who were invited by the department head. I feel as though the students should have been given a say about who is representing us, but I understand that BIPOC people shouldn't be expected to shoulder that burden. I am concerned that through putting these student representatives who are cis and white in a position of power over minority students where one did not formerly exist, systemic racism is what is being perpetuated. Am I wrong to see it this way? Any advice?

A: Yikes, I think this is a perfect example of ways in which these types of things can pop up. I am sorry you all are having to deal with that. Obviously the best solution would be to take volunteers for the positions and increase the size to increase representation. I think asking volunteers you can avoid people feeling obligated as I am sure there are many students who would welcome the opportunity to share feedback and shape DEI efforts moving forward.