NO, BIG DEAL
MICROAGGRESSIONS AT HAVERFORD

POST-CONVERSATION TRANSCRIPT

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS
AN OMA/CPGC COLLABORATION
No, Big Deal.
Microaggressions at Haverford

re.act: Community Conversation Series
Sponsored by the Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) and Center for Peace and Global Citizenship (CPGC)

Friday, Nov. 4, 2016
CPGC Cafe, Stokes 104

SESSION OVERVIEW

What is cultural appropriation? Is it something we are all capable of doing? How can we appreciate and honor heritages we do not represent? Join Ben Hughes and Stephanie Zukerman as we discuss these questions.

(re)CC COMMITTEE

- Stephanie Zukerman, CPGC Program Coordinator
- Benjamin Hughes, OMA Program Coordinator
- Maia Williams, Student Activities Office Graduate Assistant
- Ananya Kumar BMC ‘18, CPGC Intern
- Riddhi Panchal ‘19, OMA Intern

COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS

- Leslie Luqueno ‘20, Students’ Council First-Year Representative FACILITATOR
- Rosa Urquiza ‘20 FACILITATOR
- Mercedes Davis ‘20 FACILITATOR

GUIDING QUESTION(S)

- What are microaggressions?
- How do they show up in our community?
- Can they be as harmful as blatant discrimination?
SESSION NOTES

WATCH: Racial Microaggressions: Comments that Stay (NY Times)
https://youtu.be/85JVcniE_M

- The video details episodes of microaggressions on Harvard’s campus and voiced the anguish and feelings of underrepresented students post such experiences.

WHAT TERMS CAN WE USE TO TALK ABOUT MICROAGGRESSIONS?
(See Attached Worksheet)

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS (Personal Experiences)

- Each person was asked to write down their experiences of microaggressions and any feelings attached to it on a notecard.

- Next, we split up into groups of 4-5 and shared our experiences and also responded to the following questions:
  - If a person from a marginalized group pointed out to you that one of your comments was a microaggression, how would you respond at the time?
  - How would you avoid making a similar comment in the future?

LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION

- At times these are feelings of helplessness attached to responding to such events.
  - A lot of people noted that they hadn’t even registered a comment as a microaggression, but now knowing the language they are reconsidering.

- These episodes and their recurrence have led people to believe that such comments are ‘normal’, and as such, others may be oblivious to the fact that their comments were hurtful.

- We also spoke about the role that power dynamics play in perpetuating microaggressions.
  - Particularly for people from marginalized identities, the stigma of being categorized as the angry or emotional (X) can make it difficult to speak up.
  - Furthermore, those marginalized identities extend beyond just race and include a host of other markers: sexuality, socioeconomic status (class), gender, ability, religion, nationality, etc.
WHAT ARE SOME WAYS PEOPLE RESPOND WHEN THEY REALIZE THEY ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS BEHAVIOR? (Open Question)

- Acknowledging your mistake
- Being sincere in your apology
- Discuss how you can learn more about what you did and educate others

FURTHER RESOURCES

- *Racial Microaggressions: Comments that Stay*  (Video)  
  [https://youtu.be/_85JVcniE_M](https://youtu.be/_85JVcniE_M)

- *Students See Many Slights as Racial ‘Microaggressions’* | Tanzina Vega  

- *I, Too, Am Harvard | Ahsante the Artist* (Video)  
  [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uAMTSPGZRiI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uAMTSPGZRiI)

- Mircoaggressions Worksheet (Attached)
Microaggressions

Commonplace verbal or behavioral indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory or negative slights and insults to members of oppressed or targeted groups.

Microassaults
(often conscious)
Explicit derogations (racial/gender/sexuality/religion/ability/class/etc) characterized primarily by a violent verbal or nonverbal attack meant to hurt the intended victim through name-calling, avoiding behavior or purposefully discriminatory actions.

Microinsults
(often unconscious)
Behavioral/verbal remarks or comments that communicate rudeness or insensitivity and demean a person’s heritage/ability/identity; includes body language, facial expressions, etc.

Microinvalidations
(Often unconscious)
Verbal comments or behaviors that exclude, negate, or nullify the thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of members of oppressed or targeted groups.

Environmental Microaggressions (macro-level)
Targeted assaults, insults and invalidations that are manifested on systemic and environmental levels.

Racial Microaggression Themes:

- Ascription of intelligence
- Second class citizen
- Pathologizing cultural values/communication styles
- Assumption of criminal status
- Alien in own land/perpetual foreigner
- Color blindness
- Myth of meritocracy
- Denial of individual racism
- Racial Environmental Microaggressions

Gender Microaggressions Themes:

- Sexual objectification
- Assumptions of inferiority
- Assumptions of traditional gender roles
- Use of sexist language
- Denial of individual sexism/genderism
- Invisibility
- Denial of the reality of sexism/genderism
- Environmental gender microaggressions

Adapted from:

LGB(T) Microaggressions Themes:

- Use of heterosexist or transphobic terminology
- Endorsement of heteronormative or gender normative culture and behaviors
- Assumption of universal LGBT experience
- Exoticization
- Discomfort with/disapproval of LGBT experience
- Denial of the reality of heterosexism or transphobia
- Assumption of sexual pathology/abnormality
- Denial of individual heterosexism or transphobia

Ability Microaggression Themes:

- Denial of personal identity
- Denial of disability experience
- Denial of privacy
- Assumption of helplessness
- Secondary Gain
- Spread effect
- Infantilization
- Patronization
- Second class citizen
- Desexualization

Reactions to microaggressions

- Behavioral: React through actual behaviors; choose to respond, choose not to confront, etc.; avoid certain environments;
- Cognitive: Learn to accept as part of everyday life; may consider oneself more resilient or empowered due to dealing with microaggressions;
- Emotional: May feel sad, frustrated, angry, resentful, disappointed, etc.

Responses to microaggressions

- Individual may choose to confront microaggressor (always or usually)
- Individual may choose to ignore or “explain away” microaggression
- Individual may choose to pick battles and address microaggressions if they believe doing so may actually be worth the effort

Adapted from: