Addressing Racism and Subtle Acts of Exclusion in the Design and Construction Workplace

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DEMOGRAPHICS

Race/Ethnicity

- White: 60.10%
- Hispanic or Latino: 27.80%
- Black or African American: 6.70%
- Asian: 3.60%
- Other or Multiple Races: 1.80%

Gender

- Male: 88.60%
- Female: 11.40%
MICROAGGRESSION

Are everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target a person based solely upon their marginalized group membership (Sue et al., 2007)
COST OF BIAS IN THE WORKPLACE
TYPES OF MICROAGGRESSIONS

- Micro-assaults
- Microinsults
- Micro-invalidations
FORMS OF MICROAGRESSIONS

Exclusion
Inappropriate comments or jokes
Lack of accommodation
Unconscious bias
Underestimating competence
Tokenism
Stereotyping
YOUR EXPERIENCE OF INCLUSION

Focusing on exclusion
• Describe the impact of exclusion on you. What did you feel? What was the impact on your performance?
• What were the actions and behaviors of leaders and peers that fostered that experience?

Focusing on inclusion
• Describe the impact of inclusion on you. What did you feel? What was the impact on your performance?
• What were the actions and behaviors of leaders and peers that fostered that experience?
WHY REFRAME THE TERM “MICROAGGRESSION”?

Lack of clarity about what microaggression is and why they are a problem

“microaggression communicates implicit, unspoken messages that are often beyond our control"
ELEMENTS OF MICROAGGRESSIONS

They are subtle

They are acts

They serve to exclude

“You are a credit to your race.”

That reflect a bias or stereotype.

With a clear message—“People of color are generally not as intelligent as Whites.”

Subtle Acts of Exclusion
IMPACT

You are invisible
You (or people like you) are inadequate
You are not an individual
You don’t belong
You are not normal
You are a curiosity
You are a threat
You are a burden
WHY UNDERPERFORMANCE?
SCARF Model of Social Threats and Rewards

Distracted
Anxious
Think less clearly
Reduced memory
Cortisol/Stress
Poorer Performance
Weakened Immune System

Positive
Innovative
More Focused
Creative
Engaged
Resilient
Collaborative
Involved

5 domains
PUTTING A PAUSE ON DECISIONS
PUTTING A PAUSE ON DECISIONS

P is for **pay attention.** What was happening that caught your attention? What was your physical or emotional reaction to the behavior? What did you see as the impact on others in the room?

A is for **acknowledge your assumptions.** Why do you think this behavior is occurring? How does power play a role? Does power or privilege need to be expressed in this context? What am I assuming is acceptable in this situation?

U is for **understand your perspective.** What biases may influence my perspective? How have I contributed or supported this pattern? What have I not done to interrupt this pattern?

S is for **seek different perspectives.** What would be a way to help others see the behaviors? What questions could be asked? Of whom? What perspectives would help reframe this pattern?

E is for **examine your options.** What actions would be most effective in interrupting this pattern of power and privilege.
USING PAUSE TECHNIQUE

During a meeting to discuss workplace safety, a construction manager refers to the female workers as “the girls” instead of using their actual names, making them feel dismissed and disrespected.
PUTTING A PAUSE ON STEREOTYPES

Small Group Discussion
• Handout: “Putting a PAUSE on Stereotypes.”
• Choose one or two “What If” situations.
• From the Iceberg of Human Dimensions, identify which trait could trigger a stereotype or bias.
• Use the PAUSE technique to determine an effective response.
• Report one example for the debrief.
DEBRIEF

What did you learn?

What are you concerned about?

What will you do next?
INTERRUPTING MICROAGGRESSIONS

- Name the behavior
- Explain the impact
- Educate
- Encourage feedback
- Model the behavior
- Provide training
WHAT IS ONE THING YOU CAN START DOING?

Inclusive Leadership– The Starting Place
• Requires lifelong reflective practice – A willingness to be uncomfortable

• Respecting differences AND being curious about differences

• Sensitive to power imbalances

• Starts with a willingness to examine assumptions and biases

• Requires a willingness to learn as you go – learn from your mistakes

Being comfortable with being uncomfortable
WHY SHOULD YOU CARE ABOUT INCLUSION?
QUESTIONS?/REFLECTIONS

Thank you!
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**Articles/Websites:**

- [https://necc.box.com/s/w7cq0tc4vef0e0pxmhwzjtbq6o4x](https://necc.box.com/s/w7cq0tc4vef0e0pxmhwzjtbq6o4x)
- HelenSandersonAssociates.co.uk – Person-Centered Theory
- speedoftrust.com - Stephen Covey

**Tedtalks & Videos:**

- Blind spots: Broaden perspectives - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HbBTM8bJt8Q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HbBTM8bJt8Q)
- The Urgency of Intersectionality – Kimberle’ Crenshaw, PhD. - [https://www.ted.com/talks/kimberle_crenshaw_the_urgency_of_intersectionality](https://www.ted.com/talks/kimberle_crenshaw_the_urgency_of_intersectionality)
- Why good leaders make you feel safe – Simon Sinek [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lmyZMtPVodo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lmyZMtPVodo)
- Building Trusting Teams- Simon Sinek [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dQ2vzFKOD5w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dQ2vzFKOD5w)

**Books:**

- Subtle Acts of Exclusion - Tiffany Jana and Michael Baran
- Thinking, Fast and Slow, by Daniel Kahneman
- Blindspot: Hidden Biases of Good People, Mahzarin R. Banaji & Anthony Greenwald
- Beyond Inclusion, Leticia Nieto
- Leaders Eat Last – Simon Sinek
- Braving the Wilderness – Brene Brown
- Speed of Trust – Stephen Covey
- Good to Great – Jim Collins
- Laws of Teamwork – John C. Maxwell
- 7 Habits of Highly Effective People -Stephen Covey
- Shifting the Monkey – Todd Whitaker
- The Fearless Organization: Creating Psychological Safety in the Workplace for Learning, Innovation, and Growth – Amy Edmondson, PhD
### SCENARIO 1

**“Where’s your family from? Where were you born?”**

**ALTERNATIVE**

“T’m from this place; where are you from?”

**WHY:**

Asking where someone is from may imply that you assume that person is not from the same country as you, which pressures them to defend their identity. Instead, share where you grew up and ask where that person is from without suggesting that it may not be the same place.

### SCENARIO 2

**“Wow, you are so articulate!”**

**ALTERNATIVE**

“Thank you! That presentation was informative.”

**WHY:**

Mentioning someone’s ability to articulate implies that you’re surprised by someone’s ability to do so. Empower others based on their talents and celebrate their wins.

### SCENARIO 3

You are giving someone a nickname that is easier for you to pronounce.

**ALTERNATIVE**

Ask them, “How do you pronounce your name?”

**WHY:**

Give people the respect of calling them by their preferred name regardless of how different it may seem to you. Work on your pronunciation over time; your efforts will be appreciated even if it’s a work in progress.

### SCENARIO 4

**“You’re in a senior role?”**

**ALTERNATIVE**

“What is your role?”

**WHY:**

Questioning if someone is in a senior role implies you are surprised by someone’s success. Never make assumptions about who might be the most senior person in the room.
### COMMON SCENARIOS

| SCENARIO 5 | “I support you. I have friends like you!” |
| ALTERNATIVE: | “I’m an ally.” |
| WHY | Explaining that you are not racist or discriminating because you have friends in a marginalized group ignores the individual experience of the person you’re talking to. Establish yourself as an ally and convey that you are willing to listen and learn from someone’s experience. |

| SCENARIO 6 | “Racism isn’t something that exists at our company.” |
| ALTERNATIVE | “What has been your experience at our company?” |
| WHY | If you make assumptions based on your own experience or dismiss a peer’s concerns about race, ethnicity, or culture at work, you establish that there is no room for open dialogue or differences in the workplace. Understanding individuals’ experiences can help us become more educated and better ourselves and those around us. |

| SCENARIO 7 | “I didn’t mean to sound racist.” |
| ALTERNATIVE | “Can we have a conversation about why what I said was racist? I want to learn.” |
| WHY | Validation is critical. Even if your intention was not to say something offensive, you still might have offended someone. Have a conversation to avoid language that could be offensive or misinterpreted in the future. |

| SCENARIO 8 | “Can I touch your hair?” |
| ALTERNATIVE | “What is your morning routine?” |
| WHY | It’s ok to be curious about someone’s experiences, but this question both infringes on the person’s space and implies that the person you’re talking to doesn’t fit a societal standard. Learning about and understanding someone’s personal experience creates a space for listening and learning. |