

Understanding Why Microaggressions Exist

Microaggression Series Part 1

Presented for TTADA at UND

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UND Land Acknowledgement

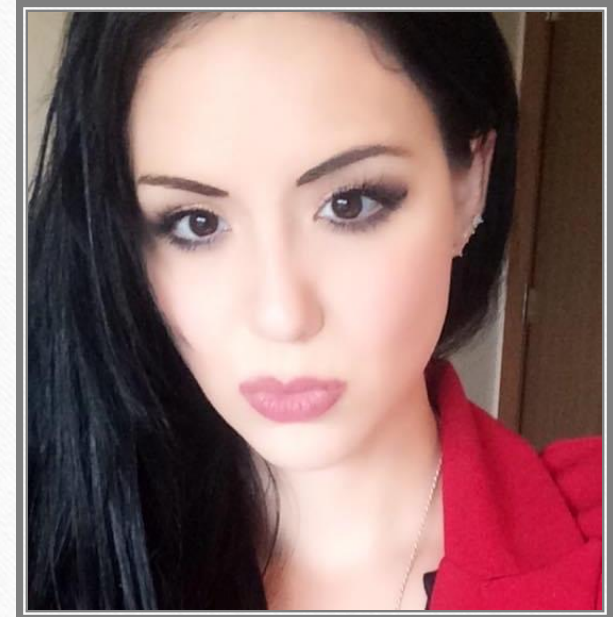
Today, the University of North Dakota rests on the ancestral lands of the Pembina and Red Lake Bands of Ojibwe and the Dakota Oyate - presently existing as composite parts of the Red Lake, Turtle Mountain, White Earth Bands, and the Dakota Tribes of Minnesota and North Dakota. We acknowledge the people who resided here for generations and recognize that the spirit of the Ojibwe and Oyate people permeates this land. As a university community, we will continue to build upon our relations with the First Nations of the State of North Dakota - the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nation, Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate Nation, Spirit Lake Nation, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, and Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians.

Committed Action: Indigenous Resources

- <https://www.racialequitytools.org/resources/fundamentals/core-concepts/decolonization-theory-and-practice>
- <https://decolonizethisplace.org/resources>
- <https://therednation.org/>
- <https://nativegov.org/resources/>

Introductions

- Dr. Cerynn Desjarlais (Ph.D. Counseling Psychology)
- Director of Online Counseling Programs at UND
- Clinical Assistant Professor – Department of Education and Behavioral Health Studies
- Doctoral Dissertation on Indigenous Spiritual Microaggressions
- UND Alumni (Graduate School)
- Metis Cree from Alberta, Canada
- Pronouns: she, her, hers



Five Part Series on Microaggressions

- Part 1: Understanding why microaggressions exist
- Part 2: Discussing the types of microaggressions
- Part 3: Explaining how individuals are impacted by microaggressions
- Part 4: Microinterventions: how to intervene when they occur
- Part 5: How microaggressions are integrated into textbooks, curriculum, assignments, grading, classroom policies, etc.

Disclaimer

- Conversations about microaggressions may cause intense emotions:
 - Anger, sadness, frustration, shock, surprise, shame, guilt, embarrassment, denial or disbelief
- Some people may be more impacted than others
 - Life experiences, identity statuses, socialization
- Emotions are information; facilitate self-awareness & emotional intelligence
 - This information is a tool to provide information about yourself interpersonal situations and contexts

Disclaimer

- Shame, guilt, anger, sadness, other intense emotions may arise
- If you are feeling triggered:
 - Please seek mental health attention from a licensed mental health provider
 - UND University Counseling Center: <https://und.edu/student-life/counseling-center/>

Show of Virtual Hands

- Who has heard of Microaggressions before?
- Who feels they have a strong understanding of what microaggressions are?
- Who feels they know how to intervene in a microaggression when it occurs?
- Who feels their classroom (or office) is free of microaggressions?

Briefly: What Are Microaggressions?

- Subtle forms of discrimination
- Manifest daily in speech, behaviors, interpersonal interactions, environment
- Intentional or unintentional
- May be due to implicit or explicit bias
- Cause cumulative harm to individuals
- Impacts mental and physical health and organizational morale

Examples of Microaggressions

A woman clutches her purse and locks her car doors as an African American man walks by.

Saying to an Indigenous Person: “My goodness, you are so articulate!”

Saying to someone with a disability when performing a daily action: “Wow, you did that all by yourself!?”

Asking a new colleague who identifies as a woman: “Do you have a boyfriend?”

A person says to their Asian peer: “Wow, your English is really good!”

Collective Recall

- What are some microaggressions that you have seen, heard, witnessed occur to others, or even experienced yourself?
- What was the underlying message of the microaggression?
- How do you believe the target felt after the microaggression?

History of Microaggressions

- Chester Pierce
 - Harvard Psychiatrist
 - Observed African Americans being dismissed by Non-Black Americans
 - Dismissal occurred despite social endorsement of “egalitarian values”
 - Perceptive on remnants of ongoing racism

Microaggression Definition

- Derald Wing Sue – Research and Work Defining Microaggressions
 - Brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults towards People of Color
 - Expanded over time and research to other minority group members
 - Gender, sexual orientation, age, immigration status, nationality, ability status, religion/spirituality, educational status, linguistic abilities, livelihood, martial/partner status, etc.



How Unintentional But Insidious Bias Can Be The Most Harmful – PBS News Hour - 8 minutes

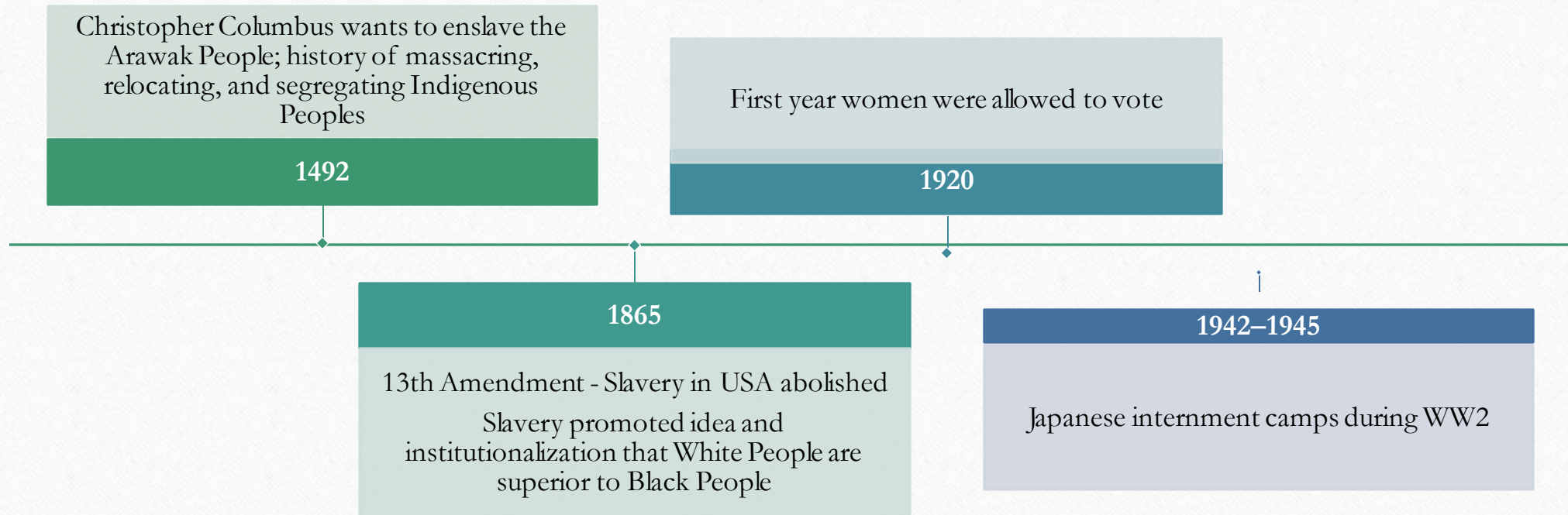
A Note on Freedom Of Speech

- People do have freedom of speech, and keep in mind the ripple effect...
 - What you say to others has an impact on others...
 - Physical health, psychological health, emotional well-being, well-being of their loved ones
 - This may impact how they think of you...
 - They may view you as ____ (fill in the blank) ____ (racist, sexist, homophobic, bigoted, etc.)
 - This may impact interactions with you...
 - You could be missing out on a great friendship, colleague, relationship, etc.
 - Impacts others in the environment...
 - Ex: Harming someone who doesn't identify in that manner but has loved ones that do

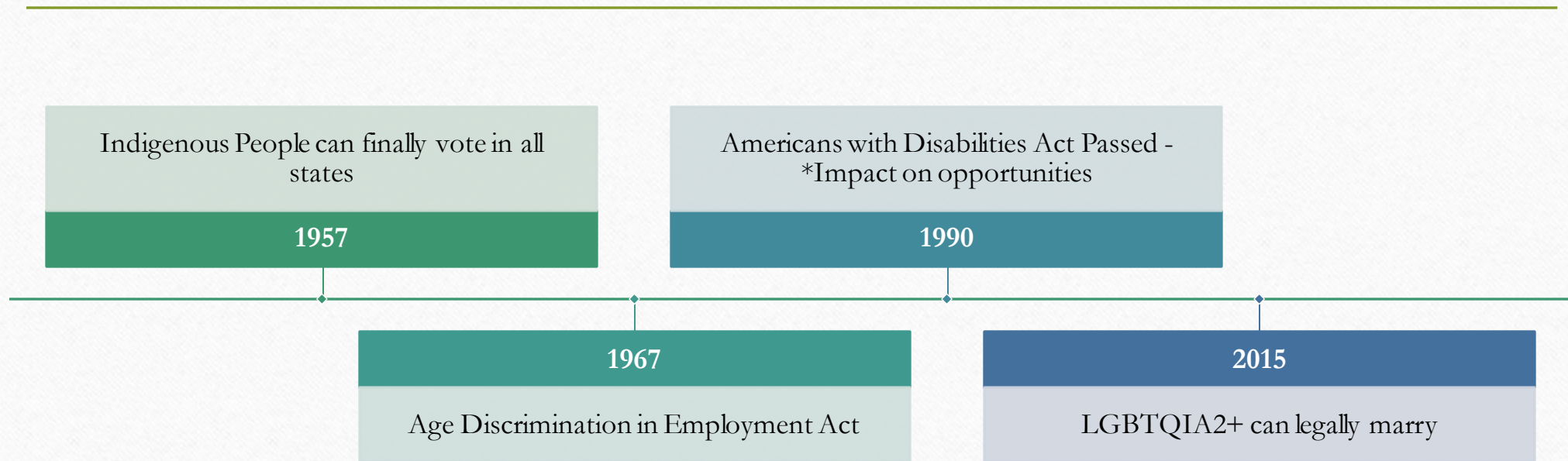
A Note on the Biases of Forebearers

- Historical events demonstrate to us that humans have historically endorsed...
 - Xenophobia
 - Fear of strangers, fear of others viewed as unlike them in some way
 - Leading to....
 - Dehumanizing words and actions
 - Slavery, genocide, war, colonization, human rights abuses
 - Racism, sexism, homophobia, ableism

A Brief History of Colonization & Oppression



A Brief History of Colonization & Oppression



How Bias Shifts Over Time

Explicit & Overt Institutionalized Bias

Hidden Bias; External Social
Acceptance of Equality

Subtle Remnants of Discrimination
Lingering in Society; Microaggressions

Some people
authentically believe that
racism no longer exists...
evidence suggests it has
not disappeared, it has
merely altered in form.

Explicit & Overt Institutional Bias

- War, Genocide, & Cultural Genocide
- Forced Relocation; Isolation to Economically Deprived Lands
- Slavery & Unequal Rights
- Internment Camps
- Anti-LGBTQIA2+ Legislation

Hidden Bias:

External Social Acceptance of Equality Without True Equality

Ex: Housing & Loan Discrimination

Ex: Redlining of School Districts

Ex: Separate Bathrooms and Pools

Ex: Unemployment and Underemployment of Ethnic Minorities

Ex: “Glass Ceiling” & “Second Shift” & Gender Wage Gap

Ex: Explicit Racial, Gender, and Sexual Orientation Epithets

Subtle Remnants of Discrimination Lingering in Society

- Evolution of Language
 - Explicit derogations → Microaggressive words/phrases or “jokes”
- Subtle Behaviors
 - Clutching a purse, locking a car door, walking on the other side of the street (assumed dangerousness)
 - Store clerks following a POC around a store (assumed criminality)
 - Seating or serving people with privileged identity statuses first despite the minority group member arrived first

Subtle
Remnants of
Discrimination
Lingering in
Society

- Avoidance, Neglect, Negligence
 - Avoiding Interactions & Eye Contact
 - Neglecting to choose a POC for a group project (assumed lack of intelligence/work ethic)
 - Avoiding a Relationship
 - Endorsing social spheres of acceptance
 - Ex: Accepting A Black Man as a co-worker, but not allowing a black man to date your daughter

Subtle Remnants of Discrimination Lingering in Society

- **Endorsing Stereotypical Representations**
 - Logos
 - Ex: Chicago Blackhawks
 - Mascots
 - Ex: Cleveland Indians “Chief Wahoo”
 - Product Placement
 - Ex: Aunt Jemima “Mammy” (subservience)
 - Media
 - Ex: Pocahontas (romanticism, sexual objectification)

Subtle Remnants of Discrimination Lingering in Society

- When a Child of Color takes items from a grocery store during Hurricane Katrina it is “looting” – a criminal activity
- When People with White Skin take items from a grocery store during Hurricane Katrina it is viewed as “finding bread and soda” – a survival mechanism that is resourceful and smart



AP Associated Press AP - Tue Aug 30, 2005

A young man walks through chest-deep water after looting a grocery store in New Orleans on Tuesday, Aug. 30, 2005. The waters continue to rise in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina did extensive damage.

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3:47 AM ET

Two residents wade through chest-deep water after finding bread and soda from a local grocery store after Hurricane Katrina came through New Orleans, Louisiana. (AFP/Getty Images/Graythen)

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RELATED

• Katrina's Effects, at a Glance AP - Tue Aug 30, 2005 3:47 AM ET

Hurricanes & Tropical Storms

Subtle Remnants of Discrimination Lingering in Society

- Dark Skin = Looting, criminality, stealing, negative connotation
- Light Skin = Resourcefulness, Survival Skills, Intelligence, positive connotation
- **** Same Activity****



AP Associated Press AP - Mon Aug 29, 7:32 PM ET

Looters carry bags of groceries through floodwaters after taking the merchandise away from a wind damaged convenience store in New Orleans on Monday, Aug. 29, 2005. (AP Photo/Dave Martin)

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Diversity & Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism: The quality of a society in which different ethnic and cultural groups have equal status and access to power but each maintains its own identity, characteristics, and mores.

The promotion and celebration of cultural diversity within a society, also called cultural pluralism.

Ex: A “mosaic” instead of a “melting pot”



Multiculturalism cannot truly be achieved until equal status has been obtained. Clearly not all groups have equal status.

Explicit & Implicit Attitudes

Explicit Attitude

- A relatively enduring and general evaluative response of which a person is consciously aware

Implicit Attitude

- A relatively enduring and general evaluative response of which a person has little or no conscious awareness

Bias

- 1. Partiality, an inclination or predisposition for or against something
- 2. Any tendency or preference, such as a response bias or test bias

Explicit and Implicit Bias

- **Becoming Aware of Explicit and Implicit Bias**
 - Everyone Has Bias at Some Level
 - Socialization- learning from others passively or actively
 - Demonstrated neurologically - response times (Harvard Implicit Association Tests - IAT)
 - Racism and other -ism's are on a spectrum - not categorical constructs

Explicit & Implicit Bias

- **How Explicit and Implicit Biases Effect Us:**
 - **Endorsement of Stereotypes**
 - **Stereotypes** - A set of cognitive generalizations (beliefs, expectations) about the qualities and characteristics of the members of a group or social category
 - Similar to Cognitive Schemas
 - Often Exaggerated
 - Negative Rather Than Positive
 - Resistant to Revision

Explicit & Implicit Bias

- **How Explicit and Implicit Biases Effect Us:**
 - **Stigma** – Negative social attitude attached to a characteristic of an individual that may be regarded as mental, physical, or social deficiency
 - Implies social disapproval against and exclusion of the individual

Explicit & Implicit Bias

- **How Explicit and Implicit Biases Effect Us:**
 - **Prejudice** – A negative attitude towards a person or group in advance of any experience with that person or group
 - Any preconceived attitude or view - favorable or unfavorable
 - Resistant to change - distort the prejudices individual's perception of information pertaining to the group
 - Affective Component - emotions range from mild nervousness to hatred
 - Cognitive Component - assumptions and beliefs about group including stereotypes)
 - Behavioral component - negative behaviors including discrimination and violence

Explicit & Implicit Bias

- **How Explicit and Implicit Biases Effect Us:**
 - **Prejudice**
 - Racism - Prejudice based on racial grouping
 - Sexism - Prejudice based on sex
 - Ageism - Prejudice based on chronological age
 - Ableism - Prejudice based on disability
 - Homophobia – Prejudice based on sexual orientation

Explicit & Implicit Bias

- **How Explicit and Implicit Biases Effect Us:**
 - Avoidance of others who are “different” or “other”
 - Negative self-beliefs, attitudes, opinions
 - Mental and physical health barriers
 - Negatively impacts team-work, cooperation, innovation

Explicit & Implicit Bias

- **How Explicit and Implicit Biases Effect Us:**
 - Discrimination – differential treatment of members of different ethnic, religious, national, or other groups
 - Usually the behavioral manifestation of prejudice and therefore involves negative, hostile, and injurious treatment of rejected groups

Explicit & Implicit Bias

- **The Role of Socialization**

- The process by which individual's acquire social skills, beliefs, values and behaviors necessary to function effectively in society or in a particular group
- Media: Television, news, tv shows, movies, radio; songs, social media
- Societal Normalization and “othering”
- Family and Community Reinforcement
 - Beliefs and values of those in authority
 - Parents, elders, teachers, community figures

Explicit & Implicit Bias

- **Lack of Contact and Personal Experience**

- Naïve assumptions
- Operating off the experiences of others
- Operating from stories
- Embedded with stigma, stereotypes, implicit and explicit attitudes and associations

Addressing Explicit & Implicit Bias

- **Importance of Addressing Explicit and Implicit Biases:**

- Barriers to success, team-work, collaboration, innovation
- Sets intrapersonal and interpersonal limits
 - Self-fulfilling prophesy, negative beliefs about self others
 - Ex: Internalized racism, homophobia, etc.
 - Harming relationships with colleagues, community members, loved ones
 - Mental and physical health costs of oppression and marginalization

Explicit & Implicit Bias

- **Becoming Aware of Explicit and Implicit Bias**
 - Deprogramming negative, harmful ways of thinking, speaking, behaving
 - Education:
 - Training, books, videos, podcasts
 - Relationships; immersive contact with “others” in the “out-group”

Explicit & Implicit Bias

- **Becoming Aware of Explicit and Implicit Bias**
 - Prevention (self-awareness)
 - Intervention (microinterventions)
 - Postvention (apology and commitment to change)

Conclusions

- Microaggressions – Subtle behaviors, verbal slights, indignities that target minority group members
- Racism, xenophobia, and other ism's occurred throughout history and while they have mitigated in many ways, they have not fully disappeared
 - Shifted over time from overt explicit derogations and events to subtle remnants found in daily language, behavior, imagery, environments, etc.

Thank You

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