



Hatch Discussion Guides suggest questions and exercises to promote critical thinking around media literacy, digital citizenship, and social issues. Rather than impose specific points of view, the guides are designed to provide parents and educators the tools to facilitate discussions on complex issues.

# MICROAGGRESSIONS WORKSHOP

### Workshop Mission:

To introduce the concept of microaggressions to teens and further their understanding by engaging them in activities around spotting microaggressions in their everyday lives.

### KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR PARENTS & EDUCATORS:

- Introducing the concept of microaggressions
- Tangible understanding through an exercise of spotting microaggressions
- Building empathy through a discussion on microaggression impact and the concept of "Death by a thousand nicks".

### Discussion Starter:

Give your child or student a foundation of information around microaggressions by reviewing some high level facts and statistics.

1. Start by discussing what **microaggressions** are. We chose to use Dr. Derald Wing Sue's definition for our workshop:

*Microaggressions are the everyday verbal, nonverbal and environmental slights, snubs or insults, whether intentional or unintentional which communicate hostile, derogatory or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership. In many cases these hidden messages may invalidate the group identities or experiential reality of target persons, demean them on a personal or group level, communicate they are lesser human beings, suggest they do not belong with the majority group, or relegate them to inferior status and treatment.*

*While microaggressions are generally discussed from the perspective of race and racism, any marginalized group in our society may become targets: people of color, women, LGBTs, those with disabilities, religious minorities, and so on. The most detrimental forms of microaggressions are usually delivered by well-intentioned individuals who are unaware that they have engaged in harmful conduct toward a socially devalued group. These everyday occurrences may, on the surface, appear quite harmless, trivial or described as "small slights," but research indicate they have a powerful impact upon the psychological well-being of marginalized groups, and affect their standard of living by creating inequities in education, employment and health care.*



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- [Dr. Derald Wing Sue](#)

2. Discuss the history of the term **microaggressions** and the expansion of the definition to include various marginalized groups.
  - a. In 1970, Professor Chester M. Pierce coined the term microaggressions in reference to the insults he had regularly seen non-black Americans level on black people. [Read more.](#)
  - b. In 1973, Mary Rowe expanded the definition to include aggressions towards women.
  - c. In 2010, Dr. Derald Wing Sue's definition expanded the definition even further by including aggressions towards any marginalized group, including the LGBT community, people with disabilities, etc.
3. The concept of microaggressions may still be difficult for your child or student to understand. Consider the following exercise and videos to help make the term more tangible through examples.

### **Activity – Microaggressions All Around Us:**

#### ACTIVITY BACKGROUND:

To help your child or student understand microaggressions in a **tangible way** and to help **build empathy** for those who feel marginalized by these daily aggressions, we suggest showing the following videos and encouraging your child or student to share microaggressions they have felt personally or witnessed in their lives as well as in the media.

#### **ILLUSTRATING MICROAGGRESSIONS EXAMPLES:**

- [Watch](#), "I, Too, Am Harvard" Video and [View](#), "I, Too, Am Harvard" Tumblr
- [Watch](#), "The Invisible Discriminator" Ad from Australian organization, Beyond Blue
- [Explore](#), LookDifferent.Org for its content and activities

#### ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

**The goal of the activity is to help your child or student understand what a microaggression is and begin to understand the multitude of ways these aggressions appear in daily life.** Watch, review and discuss the following suggested pieces of multimedia with your child or student. After you've run through this portion of the exercise, have your child or student list the various microaggressions they have dealt with personally and/or have witnessed and the underlying messages these microaggressions imply.



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### STEP BY STEP:

**Step 1:** Review the, "I, Too, Am Harvard" Video and Tumblr. For additional context on this student-led project please read the following article from the [Washington Post](#).

Potential follow-up discussion questions: "Consider some of the microaggressions that are shown or discussed in the video, have you ever heard or seen any of them play out in your own lives?", "Why do you think the concept of microaggressions resonates with so many students in college?", "Why do you think this particular project has been recreated at over 30 different colleges all over the world?"

**Step 2:** Before watching, "The Invisible Discriminator", ask your student or child if they believe microaggressions are only an American issue. Have them share their reasoning for their answer then show the video.

Potential follow-up discussion questions: "After watching the video, do you think microaggressions are a global issue?" "This video showcased some non-verbal microaggressions, have you witnessed or experienced any of these? If so, what have you seen?"

**Step 3:** With your supervision or permission, have your child or student explore the [LookDifferent.Org site](#).

**Step 4:** Have your student or child create two columns on a piece of paper with the following headers, "Microaggression" and "Hidden Message". Have your student or child list microaggressions they have heard or witnessed, whether directed to them or to someone else. Encourage your child or student to think about microaggressions that impact various ethnicities and marginalized groups (women, LGBT community, people with disabilities, etc.) After they have completed that task, have them consider what the underlying message may be to the person on the receiving end of each microaggression. [Here is a helpful download](#) with microaggression examples and hidden messages.

**Step 5:** Review your student or child's microaggression and message lists. If you are creating this exercise for multiple students, create a master list with all unique examples.

This exercise should give your student or child a tangible understanding of what a microaggression is and begin to show them how prevalent it is in their lives and lives of their family, friends and neighbors.

### **Discussion Wrap Up:**

Now that your child or student has a better understanding of what a microaggression is, it's time to discuss the impact of microaggressions on the people who are affected by these unintended



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insults. **Start by asking those who have direct microaggression experience to discuss the impact they have personally felt.** If your child or student has not experienced a microaggression directed to them, have them consider how it might feel to have one of the “hidden” messages they wrote down in the earlier exercise said to them on a daily or weekly basis. How might this make them feel?

The following are statistics to help you continue the conversation on impact:

According to a [study from MTV](#)

- 94% of those surveyed see bias — defined as “treating someone differently, and often unfairly, because they are a member of a particular group” — in their lives
- 8 in 10 say they know someone who is biased, yet 59% deny they are personally biased; 60% say they have worked hard to eliminate their biases
- 9 in 10 believe small examples of bias can add up to major problems for society
- 61% of respondents have been the target of bias, with those most affected including LGBT (85%), people of color (69%) and women (64%)
- Half of young people of color feel that “individual microaggressions, when added up, have had a serious effect on me”
- 60% of young people of color — including 74% of young Asian Americans — are often asked about their ethnic background vs. just 19% of young whites

According to a Study made in the *Journal of Counseling psychology*,<sup>1</sup>

- Approximately 78% of participants experienced at least 1 racial microaggression over the two-week study period.
- Participants reported microaggressions occurred approximately once per week.
- Participants who experienced more microaggressions reported higher negative affect and more somatic symptoms.

According to a study made in the *Cultural Diversity and ethnic minority psychology*,<sup>2</sup>

- “Microaggressions and self-efficacy were significantly associated with anxiety and binge drinking”
- Students of color reported experiencing an average of 291 microaggressions in the past 90 days.

According to a study in the *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*,<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Ong, A. D., Burrow, A. L., Fuller-Rowell, T. E., Ja, N. M., & Wing Sue, D. (2013). Racial Microaggressions and Daily Well-Being Among Asian Americans. *Journal of counseling psychology*  
<http://studenthealth.emory.edu/hp/documents/pdfs/Racial%20Microaggressions%20and%20College%20Student%20Wellbeing.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Blume, A. W., Lovato, L. V., Thyken, B. N., & Denny, N. (2012). The relationship of microaggressions with alcohol use and anxiety among ethnic minority college students in a historically White institution. *Cultural diversity & ethnic minority psychology*  
<http://studenthealth.emory.edu/hp/documents/pdfs/Racial%20Microaggressions%20and%20College%20Student%20Wellbeing.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Boysen, G. A., Vogel, D. L., Cope, M. A., & Hubbard, A. (2009). Incidents of bias in college classrooms: Instructor and student perceptions. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 2(4), 219–231.



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- 22% of undergraduates perceived themselves as the target of overt bias in the classroom in the last year. The most frequent characteristics targeted from overt bias were race or ethnicity (33%) and sex (33%), followed by religion (14%), class (8%), sexual orientation (8%), disability (3%), and other (12%).
- 34% of undergraduates reported perceiving themselves as a target for overt bias in the classroom in the last year. The most frequent characteristic targeted for subtle bias was sex (36%), followed by race or ethnicity (19%), religion (16%), class (10%), sexual orientation (5%), disability (3%), and other (11%).
- Interesting statistic: "In 2007, 36% of college students were racial and ethnic minorities"

According to a study in *Asian American Journal of Psychology*,<sup>4</sup>

- Regardless of ethnicity, perceived racial discrimination was associated with several negative mental health outcomes, including higher psychological distress, suicidal ideation, state anxiety, trait anxiety, and depression.

According to a 2009 CCn/Gallop poll, <sup>5</sup>

- While 49% of white people reported that widespread racism against blacks was fairly rare or very rare, 86% of Black people reported that widespread racism against blacks was fairly common or very common.

### About Hatch:

Hatch was launched in 2014 in response to a SheKnows Media study that revealed moms often feel tense about their kids' use and exposure to technology, understanding its benefits while also worrying about the digital footprint their children leave behind. Never before has a group of young people come of age with the ability to create and share content at scale.

Hatch's mission is to empower kids to use media and technology to express themselves in productive and positive ways. Emphasizing media literacy, digital storytelling, and social issues, Hatch enables kids to create content that is responsible and represents their unique perspectives. Education is a key component of Hatch. Parents and educators are welcome to use the materials from Hatch workshops to facilitate discussions with their own teens and tweens.

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<http://studenthealth.emory.edu/hp/documents/pdfs/Racial%20Microaggressions%20and%20College%20Student%20Wellbeing.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Hwang, W.-C., & Goto, S. (2009). The impact of perceived racial discrimination on the mental health of Asian American and Latino college students. *Asian American Journal of Psychology*

<http://studenthealth.emory.edu/hp/documents/pdfs/Racial%20Microaggressions%20and%20College%20Student%20Wellbeing.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Watkins, Nicole L. *Disarming Microaggressions: How Black College Students Self-Regulate Racial Stressors Within Predominately White Institutions*. Columbia University, 2012. Web.

[https://academiccommons.columbia.edu/download/fedora\\_content/download/ac:150382/CONTENT/Watkins\\_columbia\\_0054D\\_10751.pdf](https://academiccommons.columbia.edu/download/fedora_content/download/ac:150382/CONTENT/Watkins_columbia_0054D_10751.pdf)