

## Activity #1 -- Micro-Agressions

### **Overview:**

This activity is to bring awareness to young men and women about the topic of micro-aggressions (also referred to as micro-inequities) in the workplace. Casual degradations can create toxic workplaces for any workers.. In learning about micro-aggressions, students can become aware of when they are happening and feel comfortable attempting to stop them.

### **Objective:**

Students will learn the definition of micro-aggressions and learn examples of what they might look or sound like when gender related. In addition, they will learn methods to advocate for themselves and for others through micro-sponsorship. **Time Suggested:** 15-20 minutes, depending on discussion.

### **Step 1:**

Begin a discussion with the group by asking, “Has anyone ever been in a group coming up with ideas, and you throw out an idea but it seems to be ignored by everyone. Then, a minute later someone else “comes up” with your same idea and everyone then recognizes it?” Go on to explain that this is an example of something called a micro-aggression, casually degrading someone by not recognizing their contribution.

### **Step 2:**

Give out handout.

“Here’s a handout with a cartoon that shows something similar, but is very blatant about it because it’s making a joke.” Take a look. Next, review the statistics. The last statistic is an example of another kind of micro-aggression -- interrupting.

### **Step 3:**

Review the definition of micro-aggression. “Can anyone think of other examples of micro-aggressions you’ve seen or heard?” Often, micro-aggressions are associated with power and influence of one person over another.

### **Step 4:**

Review remainder of handout. “It’s ok and right to stop micro-aggressions when you see or hear them. Here are ways that you can do so for yourself. And, here are ways to help others, which are called micro-sponsorship.”

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## Having a Seat at the Table is Not the Same as Having a Voice



- Men speak 75% more at meetings than women.<sup>1</sup>
- Women don't get equal time speaking unless they make up 60-80% of the group<sup>2</sup>.
- Analysis of 12 years of arguments in the US Supreme Court showed that female justices were interrupted 3 times more often than male justices.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Karpowitz, Christopher F., Tali Mendelberg, and Lee Shaker. "Gender Inequality in Deliberative Participation." *American Political Science Review* (2002). doi:1-.1017/S0003055412000329

<sup>2</sup> Mendelberg, Tali, and Christopher F. Karpowitz. "More Women, but Not Nearly Enough." *New York Times*, November 8, 2012, <https://campaign-stops.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/11/08/more-women-but-not-nearly-enough/>

<sup>3</sup> Jacobi, Tonja, and Dylan Schweers. "Justice Interrupted: The Effect of Gender, Ideology and Seniority at Supreme court Oral Arguments." *Virginia Law Review* (2017), <http://ssrn.com/abstract=2933016>

## **Micro-aggression (micro-inequities): a casual degradation of any marginalized group.**

Microaggressions have been defined as brief and common daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental communications, **whether intentional or unintentional**, that transmit hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to a target person because they belong to a stigmatized group. Although these communications typically appear harmless to observers, they can be covert racism or everyday discrimination.

- 1) Interrupting is a form of a micro aggression, showing the power to stop you from speaking.
  - 2) Having other people ignore and then take credit for your idea is a form of a micro-aggression.
  - 3) Having someone explain something to you in a patronizing tone, assuming you don't know something before asking, can be a micro-aggression.
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## **Strategies for Asserting Your Voice**

- "Excuse me, I wasn't finished talking."  
"Please don't interrupt."  
"I'll address that question in a moment."
  - "I just said that."  
"Thank you, Stan, for acknowledging my earlier idea."
  - "No explanation needed, I am already familiar with that."
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## **Micro-sponsorship: focused advice and advocacy *in the moment*.**

- The Echo Chamber Solution: Create an echo effect so that an idea is heard. After a speaker (who usually isn't given credit) gives an idea, echo his/ her idea while giving her credit.
  1. "Yes, Nicole's idea is worth thinking about."
  2. "I'm glad you picked up on Nicole's idea."
  3. "Nicole, will you elaborate more on that idea."
  4. Let's let her finish her thought first.
- Affirm a person's competency. For example, acknowledge a woman's key contribution to her peers in a meeting or public forum.