Interrupting Racial & Intersectional Microaggressions (RIMAs) on Campus: RIMA Survey at UNM

Presentation to RMADOHE Research Group and Chapter
29 March 2021; UPDATE: 15 April 2021
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Workshop objectives

1. Introduce you to the UNM Division for Equity and Inclusion (DEI)
2. Define concepts: Racial and Intersectional Microaggressions (RIMAs) and Implicit Bias
3. Share examples of students’ experiences with RIMAs and Implicit Bias from published studies
4. Explore ways to interrupt RIMAs and Implicit Bias on campus
5. Conclude with your thoughts and discussion about next steps

✓ Handouts available (select “ESS handouts”): http://diverse.unm.edu/resources/handouts.html
Dr. Zerai is Professor of Sociology & Vice President for Equity and Inclusion at UNM. She is Prof Emerita at the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign, where she served from 2002-2019. A decolonial feminist scholar, she has published 5 books examining: multiculturalism, women’s access to safe water, sanitation, & mobile technology, making the work of marginalized scholars more accessible, & MCH.
Racial Microaggressions (RIMAs)
Definition

- Research has shown that racial & intersectional microaggressions (RIMAs), “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color” (Sue, et al., 2007) are a threat to inclusive climates in higher education.

- Though RMAs can be subtle and are often dismissed by perpetrators, their effects can cause anger and often drain the psychic energy of Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC).

- Unfortunately, RMAs create inequities in education, employment, health care, and housing. Implicit bias can lead to racial microaggressions.
The concept of “microaggressions,” was coined in 1970 by the late Chester Pierce, M.D. a psychiatrist at Harvard Medical School to describe the daily insults and dismissals endured by Black Americans at the hands of whites.

Dr. Pierce was the first African American full professor at Massachusetts General Hospital.
Professor Derald Wing Sue
Multicultural Campus: Rhetoric versus Reality
What’s at Stake?

Reproduce structural inequality in ways that are invisible at an institution of higher education

- Limit access to research assistantships
- Decrease quality of letters of recommendation
- Limit reviewers for papers and grant proposals
- Students told to drop classes or switch majors
- Students may withdraw from interactions with faculty, TAs & staff - miss out on key social capital
- Students may leave the university
Racial and Intersectional Microaggressions (RIMAs)

- “Racial microaggressions are *brief and commonplace* daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color” (Sue, Capodilupo, et al., 2007).

- Other types of microaggressions – gender, sexuality, religion, ability status, class . . .
  - See RMA handout and references, Sue 2010.
  - See handout about LGBTQ microaggressions.
Types of Racial & Intersectional Microaggressions

- **Racial insults**
  - Rude and insensitive actions or comments that insult BIPOC by signaling that the individual is considered *inferior* to a white counterpart, less intelligent, a second-class citizen, and given to behavior and criminality inscribed upon race. Often unconscious.

- **Racial invalidations**
  - Actions or comments that *negate* or ostracize BIPOC *lived realities*. Often unconscious.

- **Racial assaults** – similar “old fashioned racism”
  - Typically are *conscious* actions meant to demean a person through deliberate and *overt* racial discrimination, which can be *violent verbal or nonverbal attacks*, often hidden
Examples of Racial & Intersectional Microaggressions

- **Racial insults**: “You speak well” (communicates you are a perpetual foreigner)
- **Racial invalidations**: “When I look at you, I don’t see color.” (Denying BIPOC racialized experiences)
- **Racial assaults**: “NGH” image with noose embedded; lynching threat against Black instructor at UNM
Environmental or Institutional RIMAs

- Courses where all of the readings, lectures, and content reflect a white Eurocentric perspective and/or do not include BIPOC and women authors
- Mostly or all white and male portraits in places of honor
- Environmental symbols like offensive mascots, monuments, building and street names, etc
- College majors, classes, meetings, etc. that have one or a fewer BIPOC students and faculty
Study of Racial Microaggressions on Campus

Co-authors of study on RMAs in the classroom at the University of Illinois are, from left, Ruby Mendenhall, Margaret Browne Huntt, Stacy Harwood, Moises Orozco, and Shinwoo Choi. Photo by L. Brian Stauffer
RMA Online Survey, 2011 - 2012
(N = over 4,500)

- Focus: US-Born Students
  - Asian (35%)
  - Biracial or Multiracial (27%)
  - Black or African American (19%)
  - Latinx (19%)
  - Native American (<1 %)
- Undergraduate students (68%)
- Humanities and Social Sciences majors (63%)
- STEM majors (37%)
Online Survey – Quantitative Summary: Experiences of Racism on Campus

- 60% of BIPOC students reported experiencing racism on campus.
- 59% of BIPOC students reported having stereotypes made about them in the classroom because of race.
“In a small seminar class where I am the only Black person present, when someone starts to talk about issues related to Black people (and not even in a bad way), there is that moment in which they look at you involuntarily. It only lasts a split second, but it is enough to remind you of your Blackness and its under-representativeness within that context.”
In the Student Activities Building

- “Here (on campus) it's just kinda like they’re (white people) more dominant, ... and they act like sometimes they’re gonna walk through me. Like, ... literally, there was one time I was in the Union and someone was coming to me and I stopped walking because this man was not moving. He wasn’t looking. He wasn’t doing anything and I said, are you serious? [He said] ‘Oh my god, I'm so sorry, I didn’t...’ but I, I think ... you can see me so what’s the issue...”

  - Black Female Undergraduate Student
Pushed out of Classes or Majors

○ “I took the midterm and I was like “Wow, I did so good on this.” Then I got an email from my professor saying you didn’t do too great on your midterm. If you want you can drop the class, tomorrow’s the last drop date. I was like “Oh, ok.” It was interesting because I was talking to two of my friends and they also, they were Latina, and they too had received the same email. They too had done bad on the midterm but we all thought we did good. So I went to him and I talked to him during office hours. I wanted him to go through my exam and tell me what I did wrong. Because it wasn’t like multiple choice or anything, it was you know you fill it in...”

○ Latino Male Student
Pushed out of Classes or Majors (continued)

- “The only explanation he could give me was “Oh, you had the answers right, it’s just that compared to what other students gave me, this is not enough.” I was like okaaay. You can’t tell me what I did wrong? You’re just telling me, compared to what other students gave me? It was interesting because one of the girls in front of me, she was white, she got 110% on her exam and there was no extra credit. How does that happen?”

- Latino Male Student
Racial Steering in Advising about Courses and Major Selection

- When I was a freshman, I went in to see my academic adviser to help schedule my classes for next semester. When I walked into her office her expression immediately changed. Throughout the meeting, she kept questioning me on whether I could stay in the major. It seemed like when she realized I was African American, in her mind, I wasn’t able to successfully complete the major. I felt insulted and disrespected by that meeting and every other meeting I had with her.

- African American, Female
My freshman year adviser kept trying to convince me to drop my major and instead take on a different major [one of the ethnic studies majors] and a minor in [a language]. I voiced my anger to him and the department head and got a new adviser who was very supportive of me.
“You have to pick and choose your battles... There are times when you have to confront them... then there's other times when it's in your best interest not to say anything, hold your tongue.” (Latino)

- Do or say something to the person
- Make strategic decisions about when and what to say
“...[the Cultural House], it’s like another home here. ”

*Latina Undergraduate Student*

- Students of color are resistant, resourceful, and resilient
- Cultural/Ethnic Houses, Cultural Student Organizations, Cultural Greek Letter Organizations, and Cultural Studies Courses as ‘safe places’ to momentarily escape.
Reflect on Your Classroom Practices

- Classroom Sense of Belonging
  - Who do you informally interact with before and after class? Who do you ignore?

- Class Participation
  - Who do you call on? Who volunteers? Why are some students silent? Do you incorporate student ideas into lecture?

- Monitor Group Projects
  - Do you form the groups or do you let students form their own? How do you monitor group work?

- Intervene in Class Discussion
  - How do you respond to stereotypes? Do you respond with nervous laughter? Do you create a learning opportunity? Do you have a plan?
Students are often upset because faculty do not intervene.

Give students power. Tell them it is o.k. to speak up when you do or say something that is offensive.

Possible Statement on Syllabus:

“All students are encouraged to let me know if I say or do something that makes you feel uncomfortable at any point in this class. Please tell me after class, during office hours or feel free to leave an anonymous note under my office door or in my mailbox.”
RIMA Survey
Racial and intersectional microaggressions
Let your voice be heard!
By invitation only*
The Racial & Intersectional Microaggressions (RIMA) online survey at UNM

- Explores the experiences of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Color, to include individuals identifying as Asian/API, Latinx, and/or Multiracial), Persons with Disabilities (PWD), and LGBTQIA undergraduate and graduate students at UNM

- The 10-20 minute online RIMA survey was administered March 8th through April 12th

https://campusclimate.unm.edu/initiatives/rimasurvey.html
Racial and Intersectional Microaggressions

- Created a sample of students who are BIPOC and those who have accessed the LGBTQ-RC or ARC
- Sent survey link to a stratified sample of approximately 3000+ participants
- UNM IRB approved the project
- An incentive of $10 was offered to the first 1000 participants in the online survey
### Student Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Level</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>24.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Master's</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Not indicated</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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### ALL BIPOC

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<td></td>
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<td>359</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>69.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>BIPOC only</td>
<td></td>
<td>238</td>
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<tr>
<td>BIPOC &amp; LGBTQIA</td>
<td></td>
<td>52</td>
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<tr>
<td>BIPOC &amp; PWD</td>
<td></td>
<td>32</td>
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<tr>
<td>All Three</td>
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<td>37</td>
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### Non-BIPOC LGBTQIA

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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>31</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>LGBTQIA only</td>
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<tr>
<td>LGBTQIA &amp; PWD</td>
<td></td>
<td>39</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
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### Persons with Disabilities (PWD)

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<td>36</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>PWD only</td>
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The survey asks students to delineate uncomfortable spaces to allow us to design appropriate interventions to enhance UNM’s inclusive climate.
Students are asked to answer open ended questions about their experiences. Sets of questions are customized to address BIPOC, PWD and LGBTQIA concerns.
We will customize a UNM toolkit for interrupting microaggressions in various spaces on campus (e.g. in classrooms, labs, residence halls, etc).

### Tool: Interrupting Microaggressions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Microaggression Example and Theme</th>
<th>Third Party Intervention Example</th>
<th>Communication Approach</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alien in One’s Own Land</td>
<td>“I’m just curious. What makes you ask that?”</td>
<td>INQUIRE</td>
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<tr>
<td>To a Latino American: “Where are you from?”</td>
<td>“I heard you say that all Asians are good in math. What makes you believe that?”</td>
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<td>Ascription of Intelligence</td>
<td>“So, what do you believe in? Can you elaborate?”</td>
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<td>To an Asian person: “You’re all good in math, can you help me with this problem?”</td>
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<td>Color Blindness</td>
<td>“So you feel that everyone can succeed in this society if they work hard enough. Can you give me some examples?”</td>
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<td>“I don’t believe in race.”</td>
<td>“It appears you were uncomfortable when said that. I’m thinking that there are many styles to express ourselves. How we can honor all styles of expression—can we talk about that?”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Myth of Meritocracy</td>
<td>“Second-Class Citizen”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Everyone can succeed in this society, if they work hard enough.”</td>
<td>“You notice that your female colleague is being frequently interrupted during a committee meeting.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pathologizing Cultural Values/Communication Styles</td>
<td>To a Black person: “Why do you have to be so loud/animated? Just calm down.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Second-Class Citizen”</td>
<td>“You have never guessed that you were a scientist.”</td>
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<td>“You notice that your female colleague is being frequently interrupted during a committee meeting.”</td>
<td>Responder addressing the group: “_____ brings up a good point. I didn’t get a chance to hear all of it. Can _____ repeat it?”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pathologizing Cultural Values/Communication Styles</td>
<td>“I’m wondering what message this is sending her. Do you think you would have said this to a white male?”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“To a woman of color: I would have never guessed that you were a scientist.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reframe</td>
<td>“Create a different way to look at a situation. KEY PHRASES:”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“What would happen if…”</td>
<td>“Could there be another way to look at this…”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Let’s reframe this…”</td>
<td>“How would you feel if this happened to your______?”</td>
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Sample plan for Workshops once survey results are in

- Take a look at the handout, “Interrupting RMAs”. Create 1-2 scenarios with your group and plan a skit in which you interrupt a racial, SOGIE (sexual orientation and gender identity and expression), gender/sex, religious, PWD (Persons with Disabilities)-targeted microaggression.

- Plan to share your skit with the group

- You will have 15-20 minutes to plan

- Then we will report back and you will have an opportunity to share one of your skits or scenarios with the group
Can ask student/faculty: What did you learn from the workshop break-out sessions?

- Reason for break out sessions: The only way to get comfortable with interrupting RMAs is by practicing!
- What did you learn?
- Would you like to share a skit or scenario?
- How would you like to follow up on this workshop?
- What are your next steps?
I appreciate the opportunity to discuss RIMAs, and ways to reduce the impact of RIMAs implicit bias in the classroom.

We are happy to partner with you over the next several months as you determine your next steps.

Inclusion today is the key to innovation tomorrow. Our efforts will help us to grow the reputation of UNM and produce leaders in the work force who enhance both equity and inclusion in their respective fields.

THANKS again and looking forward to possibility of administering RIMA survey on your campus!
An incomplete list of references


More information about the RIMA survey and how to interrupt microaggressions

**UNM RIMA Survey Website:**
campusclimate.unm.edu/initiatives/rimasurvey.html

*Interrupting Microaggressions Toolkit:*
https://diverse.unm.edu/assets/docs/handouts-11062020.pdf

*SOGIE Microaggressions: Overview*
https://diverse.unm.edu/resources/handouts.html

*Presentation on RIMAs & Implicit Bias:*
https://diverse.unm.edu/assets/docs/essdeipresentation11062020.pdf

*Dr. Sue on PBS News Hour*
https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/how-unintentional-but-insidious-bias-can-be-the-most-harmful
 Division for Equity and Inclusion

Acronyms

- Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC), to Include Asian/API, Latinx, & Others
- Diversity, Equity, Accessibility & Inclusion (DEAI)
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual/Pansexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual (LGBTQIA)
- Liaisons for Equity, Advocacy & Diversity (LEAD) Council of Associate Deans for Diversity (& related)
- Minority Serving Institution (MSI)
- National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity (NCFDD) Faculty Success Program (FSP)
- Office For Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP)
- UNM Office of Institutional Analytics (OIA)
- Person(s) with Disabilities/Disabled Persons (PWD)
- Racial and Intersectional Micro-agression(s) [RIMA(s)], to include racial, class, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and ableism (discrimination and bias against Persons with Disabilities)
- Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression (SOGIE)
- Underrepresented Racial/Ethnic Minority (URM), to include Native American/American Indian, Black/African American, & Latinx/Chicanx/Hispano
- Vice President for Equity and Inclusion (VPEI)