

Impact of Intersectional Microaggressions on Racial Justice in Higher Education Transnationally: survey responses from students in Gauteng, South Africa and New Mexico, U.S.A.



Presentation to **United States-South Africa Racial Justice Fellows** | 27 June 2023 | 9-10.30am SAST

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Today's presentation

- Acknowledgements
- Introductions: what is your 7-word biography?
- Defining intersectional microaggressions
- Relevance of microaggressions to racial justice in higher education
- Exploring results of RIMA and GIMA surveys in U.S.A. and South Africa
- Teaching our colleagues to become upstanders
- Discussion



DIVISION
FOR EQUITY
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UNM LGBTQ
Resource Center

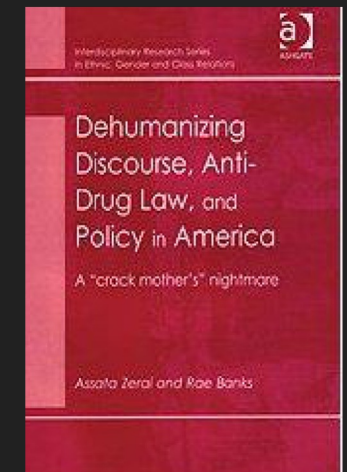
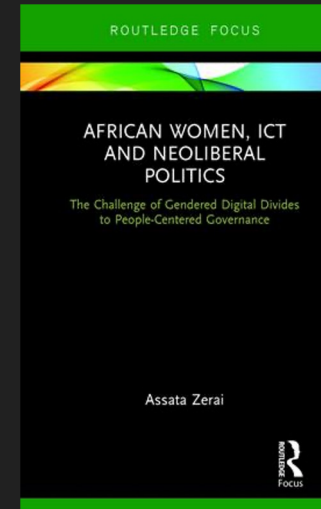
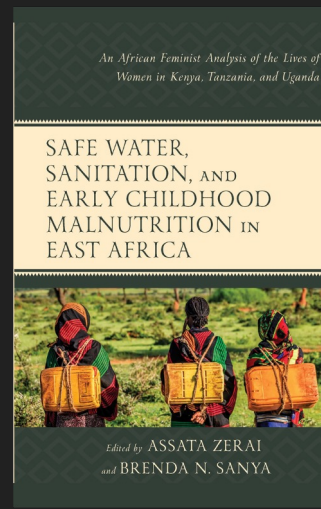
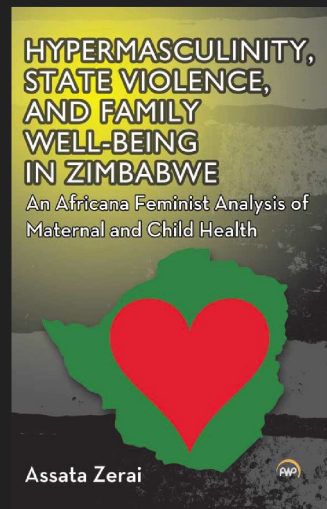
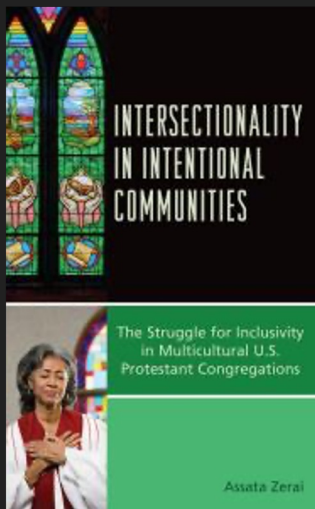


Ice Breaker: Seven-Word Autobiographies

- Please share your 7-word autobiography
- Think carefully and use words that will sum up your life experiences to date
- We love cryptic and very interesting
- Also please share your higher-ed institution & pronouns

Professor Assata Zerai's Biography

Assata Zerai, Ph.D. [she | her] is 2023 Fulbright-Hays Scholar & Visiting Professor in the School of Human and Community Development at University of the Witwatersrand. Dr. Zerai holds a full-time position as Professor of Sociology & Vice President for Equity & Inclusion (VPEI) at University of New Mexico (UNM). As VPEI Zerai leads, resources, & documents improvements in equity at UNM. Zerai is Professor Emerita of sociology at the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign, where she served from 2002-2019 & held posts as Associate Provost & Associate Chancellor. A decolonial feminist scholar, she has published 5 books spanning multiple topics including BIPOC and LGBTQ+ inclusivity in U.S. Protestant churches; MCH; access to safe water, sanitation, & mobile technology in Southern and East Africa; & making the work of marginalized scholars more accessible. She is currently writing her 6th book, a monograph, *Decolonizing the Westernized University: Black Feminist Interventions*.



Terms used interchangeably, acronyms and relevant notes

- o **Black**– includes Black people of African descent, and in South African context, this includes African, Chinese, Indian and Coloured individuals
- o **Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)**, also includes Latinx/Hispano, Asian American and Pacific Islander, and Multiracial individuals +
- o **Gender and intersectional microaggressions (GIMAs)**
- o **Gender Based Violence (GBV)**
- o **LGBTQIA**-lesbian, **g**ay, **b**isexual, **t**ransgender, **q**ueer/questioning, **i**ntersex and **a**sexual (LGBTQIA); may be referred to as 'queer and trans'
- o **Middle East and North Africa (MENA)**
- o **Persons with Disabilities (PWD)**; includes physical, emotional, cognitive, and/or sensory disabilities
- o **Racial and intersectional microaggressions (GIMAs)**
- o **Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression (SOGIE)**

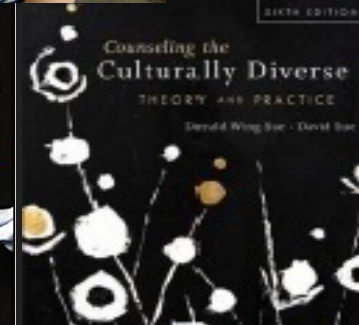
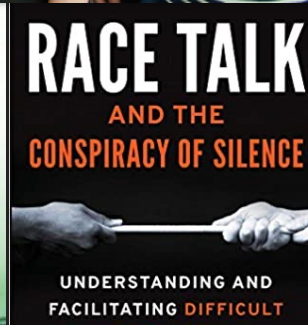
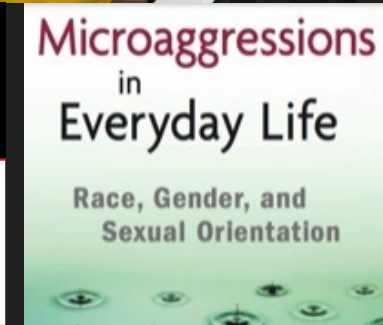
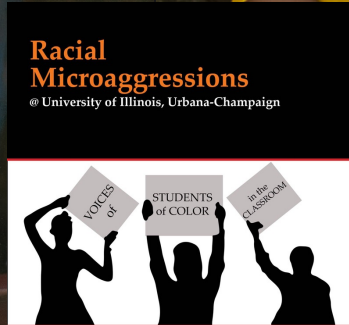
Intersectional microaggressions and GBV

- Microaggressions are defined as brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racist, sexist, ableist slights and insults toward Black, Indigenous and other People of Color (BIPOC), women (Nadal 2010), Nonbinary, Gender Fluid individuals, and Persons with Disabilities (PWD).
- In an ongoing study in Gauteng province, SA, my team and I are examining Gender and Intersectional Microaggressions (GIMAs) research has shown that such microaggressions, sexism, and women and gender-focused incivility are related to higher rates of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) (Gartner and Sterzing 2014).
- In fact, “gender microaggressions exist as a unique form of youth sexual violence and function as a potential ‘gateway mechanism’ to legally actionable offenses”.
- [Note: in accordance with UN and Declaration on Elimination of Violence against Women, “‘gender-based violence (GBV)’ is used to cover all forms of sexual and gender harassment, abuse, and rape”, as noted by Finchilescu and Dugard 2018.]

Racial & Intersectional **Micro**aggressions (**RIMAs**) Definition and Effects

- **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 RIMAs 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, including Latinx, Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI), and multiracial individuals) emotionally and physically (Pierce 1969, 1970, 1974; Solorzano 1998; Sue, et al 2003; Sue 2010).
- Unfortunately, RIMAs create inequities in education, employment, health care, and housing. Implicit bias can lead to racial microaggressions (NEA Center for Social Justice).

“Microaggressions” coined by Prof Chester Pierce (1969);
Derald Wing Sue’s taxonomy of & catalog of ways to interrupt
RIMAs (2007, ff); Harwood, et al UIUC studies (2010; 2012, ff)



Black student experiencing persistent racial harassment and assault: communicating aggression via strategically placed litter

“I cleaned and disinfected my practice room. Each time I returned to it there was trash in it. I asked to have my room assignment changed. After I began using the new room, a **banana** peel was left in it. I was the only student that had signed up for those spaces. I stopped using the practice rooms.”

Imagine you are a Black student, and this has happened to you. Consider the relevance of the broader context of a state and university with low percentages of African Americans, relative to other minority groups, and the experience of being a minority of a minority.

You may ask—or even begin a pattern of ruminating on the following Qs:

- Were these acts deliberate?
- Is this an example of a racial assault – similar to “old fashioned racism”?
- Did perpetrators target me as a woman or an African American?

Black student reports experiencing persistent racial harassment and assault: communicating aggression via strategically placed litter

- This is an example of a racial & intersectional microaggression (RIMA).
- *Regardless of the intention* of perpetrators, this student reports **persistent harassment and assault**.
- Why is this student's social and spatial location relevant to her interpretation of the litter in her practice room? [I invite you to provide responses via chat.]
- What impact might this experience have on you if you were targeted by this or a similar RIMA? [I invite you to provide responses via chat.]

Importance of social context in a state and university with low percentages of African Americans relative to other minority/minoritized groups

- Physical threat against Director of Africana Studies
- Public challenges to 2 Black women appointed to Governor's cabinet because they were not Hispanic
- Perceptions of a general climate of anti-Blackness [e.g., AA followed in stores; only 13 tenure-system Black faculty at UNM*; public reports indicating AA's are "insignificant"-and policy impact; focus on providing public resources to male Black religious leaders that obscures intersectional identities within Black communities]

*On a campus with 23k students and over 800 faculty



Black student reports experiencing persistent racial harassment and assault: communicating aggression via strategically placed litter

Racial assaults are *conscious* actions meant to demean a person through deliberate and *overt* racial discrimination; in this case it is a *nonverbal attack*, and as often happens, was hidden, as perpetrator(s) carried out acts of aggression while unseen.

- How do the hidden identities and motives of perpetrators add to potential negative effects experienced by this student? [I invite you to provide responses via chat.]
- Note that part of the insidious nature of this harassment is that without interventions, the student may ruminate on the incidents.

What's at Stake? RIMAs impact students' sense of belonging and reproduce structural inequality in higher education

- Limit access to research assistantships (Moss-Racusin et al., 2012)
- Decrease quality of letters of recommendation (Madera et al., 2018)
- Limit reviewers for papers and grant proposals (Hostra et al., 2020)
- Students told to drop classes or switch majors (Lewis et al., 2019)
- Students may withdraw from interactions with faculty, TAs & staff - miss out on key social capital (Nadal et al., 2014; Lewis et al., 2019)
- Students may leave the university (Lewis et al., 2019; Williams 2019, 2020)

Types of Racial & Intersectional Microaggressions

- **Racial insults**, e.g. “You speak well”
 - 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** , e.g. “When I look at you, I don’t see color.”
 - Actions or comments that *negate* or ostracize BIPOC *lived realities*. Often unconscious.
- **Racial assaults** – similar “old fashioned racism” , e.g., lynching threat against Black Studies Director, explicit (not implicit)
 - 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



Environmental or Institutional RIMAs

- Courses where all of the readings, lectures, and content reflect a white Eurocentric perspective and/or do not include Black 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 few BIPOC students and faculty

*Wits Gender and Intersectional
Microaggressions (GIMA) Survey*

SURVEY FOR WITS STUDENTS
OPEN FROM
26 MAY TO 30 JUNE 2023



Two Microaggressions Surveys:

- WITS GIMA Survey 2023(ongoing)
- UNM RIMA Survey 2021

RIMA
SURVEY

RACIAL AND INTERSECTIONAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

**LET YOUR VOICE
BE HEARD!**

BY INVITATION ONLY*





A study of GIMAs at Wits

- In this study, we:
 - Conducted a photovoice project to inform GIMA survey
 - Are administering a GIMA Survey ([launched 26 May 2023 to over 40k students](#)), and based on the research literature and survey results,
 - Will design interventions and lead workshops to guide the Wits community in interrupting microaggressions ([expected July-December 2023](#))
- We are learning that microaggressions are intersectional (Zerai et al 2021; Zerai 2023):
 - Such experiences are *not only* shared by students who are Black (in South African context, this includes African, Chinese, Indian and Coloured individuals), women/nonbinary, persons with disabilities (PWD), and those who are LGBTQIA
 - but **may be amplified** when a student occupies a **combination** of these intersecting social locations



GIMA PHOTOVOICE PROJECT

Day 1: orientation;

Day 2: photo upload & discussion

- Students were invited to take pictures of places where they spend time together on campus
 - They captured places where they feel safe
 - And they also captured places they may typically wish to avoid
- They uploaded their pictures & described them
- 25 students participated
- We received a list of places (see subsequent slides)
- These places were added to the GIMA survey. In the survey we ask in which places do they feel uncomfortable or that they avoid. And we ask why.

GIMA PHOTOVOICE: Day 2 photos and descriptions

- “This is a male-only residence, and such spaces are a bit uncomfortable for queer people like myself ... most (residents) in this place are cis-het men who treat me a bit different because of how in-tuned I am with my femininity.”---Photovoice Participant 5.18.23



Great Hall: Robert Sobukwe Building

I feel comfortable when I am here.

“It is my motivation to one day take graduation pictures in front of Great Hall.”--

Photovoice Participant 5.18.23

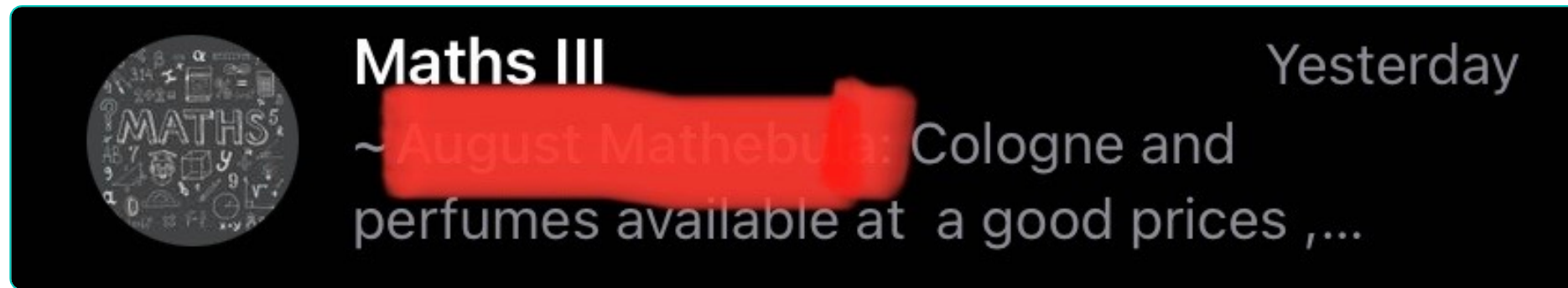


Classroom: Lecture Hall



I feel comfortable when I am here.
“All the lecturers that I have encounter(ed) are queer-friendly and (promote) a sense of belonging ... I feel at peace, and I can contribute to the class (comfortably, without fear of) being queer; and the space maybe enforces that all students act properly considering some of the (guiding) policies (available)... so I feel comfortable here.”--
Photovoice Participant 5.18.23

“I feel anxiety because this is a space where most of us are not doing so good this year (3rd), and this worries me because I might end up failing.”--Photovoice Participant 5.18.23



WhatsApp Group (for Maths III, School of Science)



Life-size Chess Board and Pieces outside an Academic Building on Education Campus

I feel both comfortable and uncomfortable.

"I feel both safe and unsafe depending on the time of day. There isn't much security, like cameras at night to capture an incident During the day I love being here because I am learning how to play chess and this place accommodates me."--Photovoice Participant 5.18.23

Passageway to the bus stop

I usually avoid this place.

“It is a narrow pathway
and I avoid this place at
night. I feel as if I might
get mugged or get
injured in some way.”--

Photovoice Participant
5.18.23



GIMA PHOTOVOICE RESULTS

PROMPT: WHAT ARE SOME PLACES ON-CAMPUS WHERE YOU HANG OUT?
WHAT ARE PLACES WHERE YOU FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE OR AVOID?

- Academic Spaces
 - Instructor's Office
 - Computer labs
- Campus Buildings
 - The great hall at night
 - Campus bathrooms
- Indoor Gathering and Meal Spaces
 - MATRIX
- Support Offices
 - Counseling & Career Development Unit
 - Financial Aid Office
- Public transportation & Parking lots
- Social media & virtual spaces
- Bridges, walkways, & passageways
- Exam and testing facilities
- Balconies, lawns & outdoor gathering spaces
- Sports and recreation facilities
 - Wits multipurpose sport hall (OMSH)
- Wits on and off campus residences
- Other spaces?

Emerging themes in the photovoice analysis

Belonging at Wits

- + Classrooms as a safe space
- + Queer-friendliness (e.g., lecturers as allies, Gender Equity Office, Gay and Lesbian Archive)
- Exclusionary toxic masculinity:
 - In certain majors
 - In male residence halls

Hopes, Dreams, & Joy

- Concerns about academic progress
- + Looking forward to graduation
- + Imagining future professions
- + Study breaks: “De-stressing”
- + Recreational activities and social outlets

Physical Safety Concerns

- Inadequate lighting at night
- Lack of security cameras
- Secluded areas of campus
- Fear of assault
- Past negative experiences in the space (personally or vicariously)
- Reports of robberies

Interrupting GIMAs at Wits

- Further this project will develop a **toolkit** for interrupting microaggressions
- The toolkit will be developed based on survey results from students, and consultations with wits students and colleagues ...
- with the hope that the Wits community can work collectively to become more effective “**upstanders**” (active bystanders who are prepared to interrupt microaggressions & GBV),
- And thus improve the security & learning environment for all students at Wits.



Note: Ethical clearance obtained from UNM, U.S. Dept of Education, and Wits.

The Microaggressions online surveys at Wits and UNM

- Explores the experiences of undergraduate and graduate students at UNM who are:
 - **Black/BIPOC** (**B**lack, **I**ndigenous and **P**eople **o**f **C**olor, to include individuals identifying as Asian/API, Latinx, and/or Multiracial)
 - **Persons with Disabilities (PWD)**, includes physical, emotional, cognitive, and/or sensory disabilities
 - Women & **LGBTQIA** (**L**esbian, **G**ay, **B**isexual, **T**ransgender, **Q**ueer/**Q**uestioning, **I**ntersex, **A**sexual)
- The UNM RIMA survey was administered Spring Semester 2021
<https://campusclimate.unm.edu/initiatives/rimasurvey.html>

UNM RIMA Survey 2021: A Summary of Results



Overall Sample Selection and Response

Category	Number Flagged for Sample	Number flagged who responded	Response rate
BIPOC	4,480	532	11.9%
Persons with Disabilities	1,305	206	15.8%
LGBTQIA	246	67	27.2%

Note: Students could select more than one category.

Summary of Quantitative Results

Racial & Intersectional Microaggressions (RIMA) Survey - Administered Spring 2021

- As an R1 Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI), UNM students reported lower rates of racial microaggressions relative to Predominantly White Institutions in U.S.
- However, reports of RIMAs targeting Black students at UNM were higher relative to other racial groups.
- Furthermore, students with disabilities most frequently reported experiences as targets of RIMAs at UNM, relative to BIPOC and LGBTQIA students.
- And LGBTQIA students reported lowest incidence of RIMAs, relative to BIPOC and PWD students.

Places where Black and all students feel uncomfortable [*indicates top spaces for all students]

Location	What are some places ON CAMPUS where you feel uncomfortable
Parking Lots and Structures	15.00%*
Fraternity/Sorority housing	13.30%
Classrooms and labs	13.30%*
On the bus/public transportation	11.70%
Academic departments	10.00%
Campus Bathrooms	8.30%*
Financial Aid Office	6.70%
The Student Union Building	6.70%
Other places on campus	5.00%
Libraries	5.00%
Johnson Gym/Field	5.00%*

Students were asked open ended questions about their experiences. Sets of questions were customized to address BIPOC, PWD and LGBTQIA concerns.

“Describe a situation in which you felt uncomfortable, insulted, invalidated or disrespected by a comment that had:

- “Racial overtones”
- “Homophobic or Transphobic overtones;
- “Ableist overtones (ableism is discrimination and bias against Persons with Disabilities)”

- Some were unwilling to answer. One noted: “I don't feel comfortable answering because of potential retaliation.”
- Others indicated that they had largely positive experiences. These are all listed at the end of this section of the slide deck.

RIMAs with focus on Race - Themes

Students marginalizing their BIPOC peers

- **Lack of bystander intervention** on part of classmates: BIPOC student uncomfortable being put in the situation of confronting use of “n word” when they did not witness this
- Insensitive and demeaning language: Colloquial use of “ghetto” and making fun of certain neighborhoods
- Classmates avoiding BIPOC students in other venues
- Stereotypes expressed against BIPOC students
 - Harassment of BIPOC students during group work
 - Assumptions that Native students do not pay tuition
 - Affirmative action assumptions

Concerns with faculty behavior, access to mentors, campus policy & authorities who do not intervene

- **Criminality and suspicions** directed toward BIPOC students & concerns about campus security: Perception of disparate treatment due to racialized assumptions concerning criminality
- Students' perceptions that faculty and administration practice **color-evasive racism** (i.e., assuming they “do not see race” and thus dismissing experiences of BIPOC students), and communicate implicit and explicit messages that certain groups do not belong
 - Racially insensitive statements
 - Expressions of surprise concerning academic accomplishments of BIPOC students
 - Faculty dismissal of impact of racism on BIPOC students
 - Lack of Black mentors

Describe a situation in which you felt uncomfortable, insulted, invalidated or disrespected by a comment that had racial overtones:

Belittling of Black students' academic accomplishments:

- “Whenever I make an academic achievement. It's consistently perceived as 'Surprising' **not sure why that is**. It's another micro aggression regardless of the 'positive' intent it doesn't diminish the impact. That a Black person can be intelligent, at least in the way certain individuals perceive intelligence.”
- “At the graduate level, I've had unsolicited discussions about [how] they felt Affirmative Action was unfair.”

Advisement of BIPOC Student with Disabilities Gone Awry

- “Meeting w/ program advisor and she indicated that I don't have a severe mental illness (despite documentation), I just do not have my priorities straight, because she knows plenty of people with depression who do not struggle or make a scene like I do. ... She told me that medication was not going to help me because it is just a flaw in my personality.”

BIPOC students as targets of misgendering, transphobia, and dismissal of Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression (SOGIE) experiences



- “Transphobic undertones are just so rampant in my academic program. People are really well intentioned, but they just act like trans people don't exist ... and show notable discomfort (uncomfortable laughing, grimacing) when I bring up trans bodies and experiences...”
- “Being misgendered regularly despite having my pronouns worn or in my zoom name”
- “Once in a class, I said 'trans women are women' and the professor said 'not for everyone though'”

The Power of Intervening: Interrupting Microaggressions

The top concern of BIPOC, Students with Disabilities, & Queer and Trans students is the perceived inaction of authorities – staff observing RIMAs, department chairs, faculty, advisors, and graduate assistants.

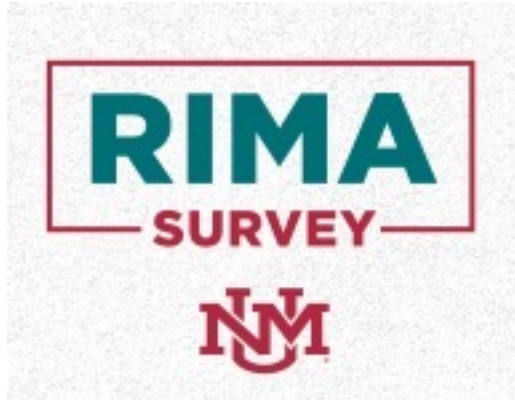


See link to toolkits for interrupting RIMAs,
<https://campusclimate.unm.edu/rima-survey/research.html>



...or use QR code and click on "research" link to the left

- DEI led workshops to practice interrupting RIMAs
- “Upstander” workshops have shown positive results.
- Focus of workshops is to build community.
- Faculty, students, & staff get the opportunity to practice interrupting RIMAs.
- **Note: an upstander acknowledges experiences of individuals experiencing RIMAs and is willing to serve as an ally and advocate.**



The UNM RIMA team created a toolkit for interrupting RIMAs on the basis of our survey results and workshops, as well as assets provided by the relevant literature in the social sciences and higher education.

TOOL: INTERRUPTING RACIAL AND INTERSECTIONAL MICROAGGRESSIONS		
RIMA THEME AND EXAMPLE	THIRD PARTY INTERVENTION EXAMPLE	COMMUNICATION APPROACHES
Alien in One's Own Land		
To Latinos or AAPI folks from U.S.: "Where are you <i>really</i> from?"	"I'm just curious. What makes you ask that? I already told you that I am from Colorado."	INQUIRY: Ask the speaker to elaborate. This will give you more information about where they are coming from, and may also help the speaker to become aware of what they are saying.
Ascription of Innate Ability versus Hard Work:		
To an AAPI person, "Of course you got an 'A', you are Asian!"	"It sounds like you think I get As because I am AAPI and not because I studied. What makes you believe that?"	KEY PHRASES: "Say more about that." "Can you elaborate on your point?" "It sounds like you have a strong opinion about this. Tell me why." "What is it about this that concerns you the most?"
Color-Evasive Racism:		
"I don't see race."	"When you say that, it does not acknowledge my experiences, culture, and language."	PARAPHRASE & REFLECT: Reflecting on essence of what the speaker has said by briefly restating in your own words demonstrates your desire to understand them and reduces defensiveness. Reflect with speaker on both content and feelings as appropriate.
Myth of Meritocracy:		
"Everyone can succeed in this society, if they work hard enough."	"So, you feel that everyone can succeed if they work hard enough. Can you share examples?"	KEY PHRASES: "So, it sounds like you think..." "You're saying..." "You believe..."
Pathologizing Expression & Communication Styles:		
To Black student, "Why do you have to be so loud/animated? Just calm down."	"It appears you were uncomfortable when ___ said that. I'm thinking that there are many styles to express ourselves. Let's talk about how can we honor all styles of expression?"	REFRAME: Create a different way to look at a situation. KEY PHRASES: "What would happen if?" "Could there be another way to look at this....?" "Let's reframe this..." "How would you feel if this happened to your ___?"
Second-Class Citizen		
You notice that your female colleague is frequently interrupted during a committee meeting	"Responder addressing the group: ___ brings up a good point. I didn't get a chance to hear all of it. Can we ask ___ repeat it?"	
Assumptions about intelligence and academic success		
To a BIPOC woman: "I would've never guessed that you are a scientist." Or: "You read well!"	"I'm wondering what message this is sending her. Do you think you would have said this to a white male?"	INQUIRY & ACCURATE INFO: KEY PHASES: "What does a scientist look like?" "She has a Ph.D.; she should be able to read well!"
Sources: Harwood et al (2010); Zerai et al (2021); Adapted from: Kenney (2014); Kraybill (2008); LeBaron (2008); Peavey (2003); Sue (2010).		

Intervention Examples: Four Communications Approaches that can be Generalized to Multiple Scenarios

- **[1] INQUIRY [STRATEGIC Qs] & ACCURATE INFORMATION:** Ask the speaker to elaborate. This will give you more information about where they are coming from. It may also help the speaker to become aware of what they are saying.
- **KEY PHRASES:**
- “Say more about that.”
“Can you elaborate?” “It sounds like you have a strong opinion about this. Tell me why.” “What is it about this that concerns you the most?”
- “Did you know” [add fact from literature to dispel stereotypes, such as: “Did you know African Americans give the greatest % of their earnings to charity?”]
- **[2] PARAPHRASE & REFLECT:** Reflecting on essence of what the speaker has said by briefly restating in your own words demonstrates your desire to understand them and may reduce defensiveness. Reflect with speaker on both content and feelings as appropriate. After exploring their perspectives, invite their self reflection on impact of statements.
- **KEY PHRASES:**
- “So, it sounds like you think...” “You’re saying...”
“You believe...”
- “When you say that, it does not acknowledge my experiences, culture, [if applicable:] and language.”
- **[3] REFRAME:** Create a different way to look at a situation.
- **KEY PHRASES:**
- “What would happen if ...?”
“Could there be another way to look at this....?”; “Let’s reframe this...”;
“How would you feel if this happened to your _____?”
- **[4] REDIRECT:** Shift focus to a different person or source of information
- **KEY PHRASES:**
- “Let’s shift the conversation...” ;
“Let’s open up this question to others...”;
“Let’s consult the academic literature on this one instead of relying on opinions.”

SMALL GROUP Session

- Take a look at the handout **Interrupting RIMAs**
- Discuss the ways in which you would interrupt a racial, SOGIE (sexual orientation and gender identity and expression), gender/sex, religious, PWD (Persons with Disabilities)-targeted microaggressions and implicit bias.
- Plan to share your interventions with the group
- You will have approx. 8 minutes to discuss
- Then we will report back to the group
- We will practice for the first case

Case 1: Let us practice interrupting the RIMA for a Black student experiencing persistent racial harassment: communicating aggression via strategically placed litter

“I cleaned and disinfected my practice room. Each time I returned to it there was trash in it. I asked to have my room assignment changed. After I began using the new room, a **banana** peel was left in it. I was the only student that had signed up for those spaces. I stopped using the practice rooms.”

GROUPS 1-2: Imagine this has happened to you, as a Black trans student.

GROUP 3-4: Imagine you were the white Latina staff person who assigned practice rooms and that this was brought to your attention.

GROUP 5-6: Imagine you are the white cis-gender female department chair, and that the staff person brought this to your attention.

SMALL GROUP SESSION

We will assign you to a small group

See Toolkit: Interrupting RIMAs

- Your group will examine **one case at a time**. **Discuss the ways in which you would interrupt** racial/ethnic, SOGIE (sexual orientation and gender identity and expression), gender/sex, religious, PWD (Persons with Disabilities)-targeted **RIMAs**
- Plan to **share** your interventions with the larger group
- You will have approximately **8 minutes** in each small group session (**assign facilitator, notetaker and reporter**)
- Then we will **report back** to the group by sharing your observations and interventions in the chat and out-loud (5 minutes)
- **We will repeat** this to look at the second case, and then the third and final case

CASE 2

Ben shares with his colleagues that he is transgender

- A neurobiologist wrote a letter to his colleagues. He signed the letter with his birth name, Barbara Barres, but made it clear that from now on he wished to be known as Ben. “Whenever I think about changing my gender role, I am flooded with feelings of relief,” he wrote. “I hope that despite my transgender identity you will allow me to continue with the work that, as you all know, I love,” he concluded his letter.
- **Prompt:** Think of your various roles in your department.
- GRPS 1-2: How would you respond if one of your faculty colleagues continually referred to Ben as Barbara?
- GRPS 3-4: How would you respond if the dean misgendered Ben?
- GRPS 5-6: How would you respond if your students misgender Ben?

CASE 2

Ben shares with his colleagues that he is transgender:
a true story

- A neurobiologist wrote a letter to his colleagues. He signed the letter with his birth name, Barbara Barres, but made it clear that from now on he wished to be known as Ben. “Whenever I think about changing my gender role, I am flooded with feelings of relief,” he wrote. “I hope that despite my transgender identity you will allow me to continue with the work that, as you all know, I love,” he concluded his letter.
- **This is a true story:** To Barres' great joy, his colleagues responded with unwavering support. What they didn't know was that he'd been unable to sleep for a week as he mulled whether to transition to male or commit suicide.
- See <https://mitpress.mit.edu/books/autobiography-transgender-scientist>

CASE 2

Ben shares with his colleagues that he is transgender:
a true story

Comments from
UNNM LGBTQ-RC
Director,
Frankie Flores:

- Being true to oneself is a privilege many LGBTQIA folks do not experience.
- The suicide rates for LGBTQIA folks are 5 times higher than the national average. For trans folks, 41% attempt suicide at least once.
- Heterosexism, homophobia and transphobia are extremely dangerous for the LGBTQIA community because it posits our existences in correlation to who we love and ignores the reality that we are a culture. We would never ask a person to minimize their gender, ethnicity or other innate status.

CASE 3

Student with a Disability Meeting with Academic Advisor

- **Advisor:** “Come in”
- **Student with a Disability:** *(comes in and take a seat)* Hi. I’m here today because I’m feeling a bit overwhelmed with my workload this semester. I taking 18 credits and think it will help me if I drop one.”
- **Advisor:** “Well you know this is a tough major. Have you considered other majors that will be less demanding?”

- **Group session:**
 - *What RIMAs are present?*
 - *Act out the scene and include ways to interrupt RIMAs ~ Groups 1-3: student; Groups 4-6: advisor*

CASE 3

Student with a Disability Meeting with Academic Advisor

- **Advisor:** “Come in”
- **Student with a Disability:** *(comes in and take a seat)* Hi. I’m here today because I’m feeling a bit overwhelmed with my workload this semester. I taking 18 credits and think it will help me if I drop one.”
- **Advisor:** “Well you know this is a tough major. Have you considered other majors that will be less demanding?”
- **Intervention example:**
- **(Volunteer) PWD Student:** I believe that I can succeed in this major with the proper support. Do you have resources that can help me to succeed? If they say no, ask them to recommend someone else that you can speak to about support.
- **Advisor:** I am sorry. Why are you taking 18 credit hours again?
- **PWD Student:** I am trying to graduate early because I cannot afford my senior year.

Discussion and Conclusion

- Workshops with break-out sessions are impactful. The only way to get comfortable with interrupting RIMAs is by practicing!
- What did you learn?
- How would you like to follow up on this workshop?
- Thank you for the opportunity to discuss RIMAs, and ways to reduce the impact of RIMAs implicit bias in the classroom.
- Inclusion today is the key to innovation tomorrow. Our efforts will help us to produce leaders in the work force who enhance equity and inclusive excellence in their respective fields.

Background slides, definitions, and references



Terms used interchangeably, acronyms and relevant notes

Asian/Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) – includes Asian, Asian American, and Hawai’ian students unless otherwise indicated

Black, African American – includes Black people of African descent

Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (**BIPOC**), also includes Latinx/Hispano, Asian American and Pacific Islander, and Multiracial individuals

Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, & Inclusion (DEAI)

Indigenous, Native American, American Indian – used interchangeably

Liaisons for Equity, Advocacy & Diversity (LEAD) Council of associate deans for diversity

Office of Institutional Analytics (OIA)

Persons with Disabilities (PWD); includes physical, emotional, cognitive, and/or sensory disabilities

Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression (SOGIE)

URM: Underrepresented Racial/Ethnic Minorities: American Indian, Black,

Hispanic/Latina/o/x. See NSF: <https://www.nsf.gov/statistics/2017/nsf17310/digest/glossary-and-key-to-acronyms/>

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More information about the UNM RIMA survey and how to interrupt microaggressions

UNM RIMA Survey Website:

<https://campusclimate.unm.edu/rima-survey/index.html>

Contents:

- *Interrupting Microaggressions Toolkit
- *SOGIE Microaggressions: Overview
- *Presentation on RIMAs & Implicit Bias
- *Dr. Sue on PBS News Hour



Resources from UNM DEI+

- Handouts:
 - RMAs: An Overview
 - Interrupting RMAs
 - SOGIE microaggressions: overview
 - Case development for Racial Bias in Medicine Small Group Session
 - Facilitator Guide
- DallaPiazza, M. et al 2018. Exploring Racism and Health: An Intensive Interactive: Session for Medical Students
 - https://www.mededportal.org/doi/10.15766/mep_2374-8265.10783
- LGBTQRC.UNM.EDU
- LGBTQRC.UNM.EDU Confidential Advocate
- Disability and leadership: Engendering visibility, acceptance, and support: https://www.heidrick.com/Knowledge-Center/Publication/Disability_and_leadership_Engendering_visibility_acceptance_and_support



Division for Equity and Inclusion

Acronyms

- Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC), to Include Asian/API, Latinx, & Others
- Diversity, Equity, Accessibility & Inclusion (DEAI)
- Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI)
- 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-aggression(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)



**Thank
you!**



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