Interactions Matter

Meaning in the Minimal
Overview

1. Why small interactions matter
2. What are microaggressions?
3. What can you do?
4. Why is this important?
Why small interactions matter
Defining small interactions

- They’re interpersonal
- Passerby conversations
  - Small talk
  - Meeting someone new
- Part of bigger interactions
  - Presentations
- Not always verbal
- It’s easy to brush these off as inconsequential
How I ask you to challenge these assumptions:

- Begin to recognize the importance of small interpersonal interactions
- Why?
  - Because they shape larger relations
  - Because what may feel inconsequential to you may not feel inconsequential to someone else
  - Because impacts matter just as much (or more) than intents
- Learn to recognize the impact and patterns of these behaviours
Microaggressions
What is a microaggression?

Everyday verbal and non-verbal cues and actions that may be intentional or unintentional, that degrade members of marginalized groups.

Can be based:
● Race/ethnicity
● Gender
● Sexuality
● (Dis)ability
● Etc
What’s wrong with microaggressions?

● On giving end:
  ○ They render relationships and interactions inequitable
  ○ They lose trust
  ○ They can build up barriers over time
  ○ They can lead to further marginalization

● On receiving end:
  ○ They’re harmful (to varying levels)
  ○ They isolate and other
  ○ They can lead to further marginalization
Intent vs. Impact

- **Intent:**
  - Purposeful?
  - Honest mistake?

- **Impact:**
  - Hurtful
  - Harmful

- **Which matters most?**
  - Regardless of intent, we should always strive to recognize the impacts of our actions and how they affect those around us
  - We create better impacts by better analyzing our intents and thinking through how they show in our actions
What can you do?
Question how things are done

- Who is involved? Who isn’t? Why/why not?
- How is people’s presence being acknowledged?
- Who is being put into what position?
- Is this a conversation this person may want to have?
- What drives your curiosities?
- How am I asserting authority?
- Does this show a pattern of treatment?
Stand up for others

- Confronting others about their actions towards you can be quite scary, and especially if they had no intent to harm you
- A common one to practice: “I don’t think x was done talking yet”
- Doesn’t always have to be a call-out
- Allyship sometimes means taking a hit
  - IE: If you’re always given a opportunity over certain peers that are just as knowledgeable, step back to allow them the same opportunity
Acknowledging your mistakes

- If you catch yourself, acknowledge it, and recognize the issue
  - Doesn’t mean the impact isn’t there, but it doesn’t go unacknowledged
- Don’t get defensive if someone explains to you why what you did was an issue
- A common one to practice “Sorry, I realize I interrupted you”
  - It’s hard to unlearn many things, but when we can recognize ourselves doing them, we can also react faster or unlearn them
- Learn to identify places where you may have interacted in this way, or have seen people interact in this way
Make space

● Space for people to discuss issues
  ○ With you
  ○ With others
● Don’t discredit people and the ways in which they feel they’ve been treated
● If you don’t need to, don’t speak for people
You don't need to be a voice for the voiceless. Just pass the mic.
Why is this important?
The systems we take part of are based on interactions

- Microaggressions exclude and isolate
  - Break down relationships
  - Break down opportunities for self-actualizations
  - Break down opportunities to engage
- We’re not actually better off when we unfairly exclude people
- Microaggressions don’t just hurt opportunity to get better work, they also just hurt
We become leaders because we want to make a change

- It’s hard to make a positive change if you’re hurting or discrediting people on the way there
- Leadership demands action, but leadership also demands listening and understanding
- We become better leaders when we act in more equitable ways
Thank you!