Our Linguistics Community Addressing Bias, Power Dynamics, Harassment

Hosts: Penny Eckert and Sharon Inkelas

Linguistic Society of America Annual Meeting 2018

Outline

- Opening remarks
- Panelist presentations
- Audience discussion of sample scenarios

The importance of civility

- Harassment and incivility aren't just annoying
 - They erode confidence and inhibit creativity
 - They can derail careers
 - They are at odds with the mission of any academic department, institute, or conference

This is the moment

- Harassment and incivility are ubiquitous
 - Well-known cases in the news
 - "Open secrets" and "known offenders" in our communities
 - Over 1700 entries so far in the sexual harassment survey on "The Professor is In" blog

Infrastructure on campuses (focused on Title IX issues)

- Clear policies re sexual harassment and violence
- Clear mechanisms for investigation and adjudicating incidents
- Confidential resources for survivors
- Resources for remediation/healing after an incident

Civility is a broader community issue

- Know what behaviors are problematic
 - Understand the effects power imbalances can have
 - Talk about these issues with your colleagues
 - Strive for community understanding
- The LSA cannot enforce good behavior
 - It can only encourage community reflection and action

Our roles

- Be an active bystander; be an ally
- This requires understanding and empathy
 - Targets of harassment may be traumatized and not behave as others might expect
 - Don't force a survivor to confront a harasser
- The most effective conversations are local: take this back to your workplace

Our Panel

- Gregory Ward Northwestern University
- Kristen Syrett Rutgers University
- Itamar Francez University of Chicago
- Anne Charity-Hudley UC Santa Barbara
- Katherine Campbell-Kibler The Ohio State University

Implicit Bias, Slurs, and the Use-Mention Distinction

GREGORY WARD
NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

Special Session
Our Linguistics Community: Addressing Bias, Power Dynamics, Harassment
LSA Annual Meeting
January 6, 2018

Introduction

- ➤ Slurs, as a type of hate speech, have been shown to be hurtful, especially but not exclusively – when directed towards individuals who are members of the targeted group.
- But what about slurs when used as objects of linguistic inquiry? That is, when being mentioned rather than used? (I already told you, 'I' is a deictic!)
- ► First, a working definition of "slur" is in order...

[Herbert, Cassie. 2017. "Talking about slurs", unpublished ms.]

What are slurs?

Slurs:

- identify members of a social group, typically on the basis of race, ethnicity, nationality, sex/gender, sexuality, gender identity, religion, appearance, or disability;
- essentialize that group by picking out a characteristic (or set of characteristics) taken to be representative of group members;
- ▶ typically dehumanize, disparage, or derogate the targeted group;
- are socially embedded in that they draw upon and render salient a history of oppression of the targeted group;
- help to establish norms for the treatment of group members.

Some features of slurs

- Offensive Autonomy: slurs may be deemed/perceived as offensive regardless of a particular speaker's intention;
- Embedding Failure: the offensiveness of slurs projects out of various forms of embedding, including indirect reports, negations, and mentions;
 - ▶ "Pat is not a [slur]" vs. "Pat is not a linguist".
- Perspective Dependence: the use of a slur is taken to indicate that the speaker holds a negative/derogatory attitude towards the targeted group;
- Offensive Variation: not all slurs, even if used co-referentially, are judged to be equally offensive/ hurtful;
- Insulation: despite all of the above, there are contextually-determined occasions when slurs even the most pernicious can be mentioned inoffensively, e.g. reclamationally.
 - [Bolinger, Renée. 2017. "The pragmatics of slurs", Nous.]

How do slurs hurt, even when (only) mentioned?

- Slurs can prime implicit/pernicious bias, even in mention contexts, as evidenced by Implicit Association Tests (IAT);
 - Low-level cognition simply doesn't track how a slur is discursively embedded; the priming effects occur regardless of whether the slur is being used or merely mentioned.
- ▶ The hateful perspective that slurs "call forth and license" is present even when the use of a slur is denied (in, e.g., a mention context); [Camp, Elisabeth. 2013. "Slurring perspectives".]
- ▶ Thus, while a speaker who **mentions** a slur may not be (intending to be) inflicting all of the harm that a speaker who **uses** the slur inflicts, they may nonetheless be inflicting some harm.

So, as linguists, what can we do?

Given that even the mention of a slur may prime pernicious bias, how can we as linguists talk about slurs without inflicting harm?

Factors to consider in talking about slurs in a linguistic context

- ▶ Who are you?
 - What are your (multiple, intersectional) identity categories?
 - ▶ Do you have linguistic 'license' with respect to the slur(s) in question?
- Are you linguistically 'woke'?
 - ▶ Do you have an informed and critical view on how language interacts with race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality?
 - ▶ Have you established your linguistic credentials, by displaying:
 - ▶ linguistic awareness of the issues involved?
 - sensitivity in how you broach the subject?
 - empathy for the group(s) affected/impacted by a given slur?
- What is your purpose/goal in mentioning a slur?
 - ▶ To educate? To increase linguistic awareness?
 - ▶ To establish rapport?
 - ▶ To reclaim the slur and reduce its power to hurt through repeated iteration?

Factors to consider in talking about slurs in a linguistic context, cont.

- What is the setting/context for your mention of a slur?
 - ▶ Who is your audience? Do you have power over them?
 - ► Class lecture? Public talk/interview? Group of intimates?
 - ▶ How familiar are you with your interlocuters?
 - ▶ Do you (believe that you) share their values?
- Can mentioning the slur be avoided?
 - ▶ Need a specific slur be mentioned to make your point?
 - \triangleright Could a symbol (ρ) be substituted?
 - Could a historical (bosch) or fictional (Mudblood) slur be used instead (without trivializing the issue)?

Concluding remarks

- We must take seriously the notion that engaging with slurs may involve perpetuating harm
 even if that's what we are trying to work against.
- ▶ We ought to take care to limit that harm and to engage with slurs reflectively, both in terms of reflecting on what slurs do and how they are used and in terms of navigating the contours of talking about them.
- Perhaps the best way to counteract the pernicious bias associated with a slur is to interact with a variety of people from the targeted group so as to dismantle monolithic stereotypic associations with that group.



Thank you!

Gendered Language Across Contexts:

How to foster participation, level the playing field, and minimize gatekeeping

Workshop on 'Our Linguistics Community: Addressing Bias, Power Dynamics, Harassment'

Kristen Syrett

Rutgers University – New Brunswick

What is your role?

- Do any of these apply to you?
 - I'm an instructor.
 - I write reference letters.
 - I'm on a job search committee.
 - I serve on a colloquium committee or organizing committee for a conference or workshop.
 - I have a role in chairing a talk session.
 - I'm an author, editor, or reviewer.
 - I interact with people on a daily basis.

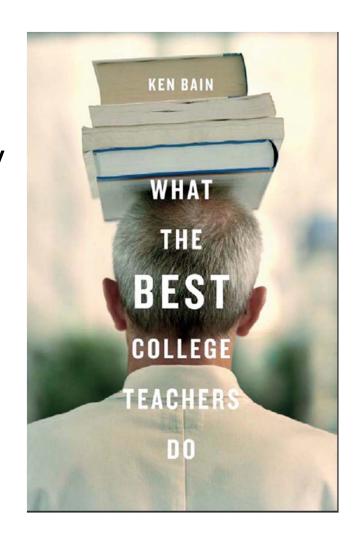
Then YOU play!

NT role to



In the classroom

- Have positive, realistic, high expectations based on individuals.
- Consider how fear and anxiety connected to stereotypes and judgment by peers can affect learning and performance.
 ("I'm confirming the stereotype!" "I have to prove people wrong/right!")
- Show an investment in and respect for students and their unique learning experiences.



In reference letters

- Watch the length.
- Pay attention to 'doub' raisers': hedges (it appears...), negative language (while/although...), faint praise (hard personal info.
- Watch the use of **'grindstone** adjectives'
- See Madera, Hebl, & Martin (2009).

ARTICLE

Exploring the color of glass: letters of recommendation for female and male medical faculty

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FRANCES TRIX AND CAROLYN PSENKA WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY

worker), and irrelevant 2003 study examining 312 letters of recommendation for 103 medical faculty positions at a large American medical school in the mid-1990; Authors had been asked by a member of the **Executive Committee for Hiring and** Promotion of the medical school to see if the letters of recommendation written for female applicants were different than those written for male applicants.

In reference letters

- Keep it balanced!
- Watch the length.
- Use formal titles.
- Refer to the research.
- Leave out personal deets.
- Don't mention emotional qualities.
- Mind your evaluative adjectives and predicates of personal taste!

Avoiding gender bias in reference writing

Got a great student? Planning to write a super letter of reference? Don't fall into these common traps based on unconscious gender bias.

Mention research & publications

Letters of reference for men are 4x more likely to mention publications and twice as likely to have multiple references to research. Make sure you put these critical accomplishments in every letter!

Don't stop now!

On average, letters for men are 16% longer than letters for women and letters for women are 2.5x as likely to make a minimal assurance ('she can do the job') rather than a ringing endorsement ('she is the best for the job').

Emphasize accomplishments, not effort

Letters for reference for men are more likely to emphasize accomplishments ('his research', 'his skills', or 'his career') while letters for women are 50% more likely to include 'grindstone' adjectives that describe effort. 'Hardworking' associates with effort, but not ability.

We all share bias

It is important to remember that unconscious gender bias isn't a male problem. Research shows that women are just as susceptible to these common pitfalls as men.

This is a problem for all of us - let's solve it together!

brought to you by:



Research from Trix, F & Psenka, C. Exploring the color of glass: Letters of recommendation for female and male medical faculty. Discourse & Society, 2003; and Madera, JM, Hebl, MR, & Martin, RC. Gender and letters of Recommendation for Academies: Agentic and Communal Differences. Journal of Applied Psychology, 2009.

Keep it professional

Letters of reference for women are 7x more likely to mention personal life - something that is almost always irrelevant for the application. Also make sure you use formal titles and surnames for both men and women.

Stay away from stereotypes

Although they describe positive traits, adjectives like 'caring', 'compassionate', and 'helpful' are used more frequently in letters for women and can evoke gender stereotypes which can hurt a candidate. And be careful not to invoke these stereotypes directly ('she is not emotional').

Be careful raising doubt

We all want to write honest letters, but negative or irrelevant comments, such as 'challenging personality' or 'I have confidence that she will become better than average' are twice as common in letters for female applicants. Don't add doubt unless it is strictly necessary!

Adjectives to avoid: Adjectives to include:

caring
compassionate
hard-working
conscientious
dependable
diligent
dedicated
tactful
interpersonal
warm
helpful

successful
successful
excellent
accomplished
outstanding
skilled
knowlegeable
insightful
resourceful
confident
ambitious
independent
intellectual

Follow us at: www.facebook.com/uacsw
For an electronic copy of this graphic, see:
www.csw.arizona.edu/LORbias

ARTICLE

In reference letters

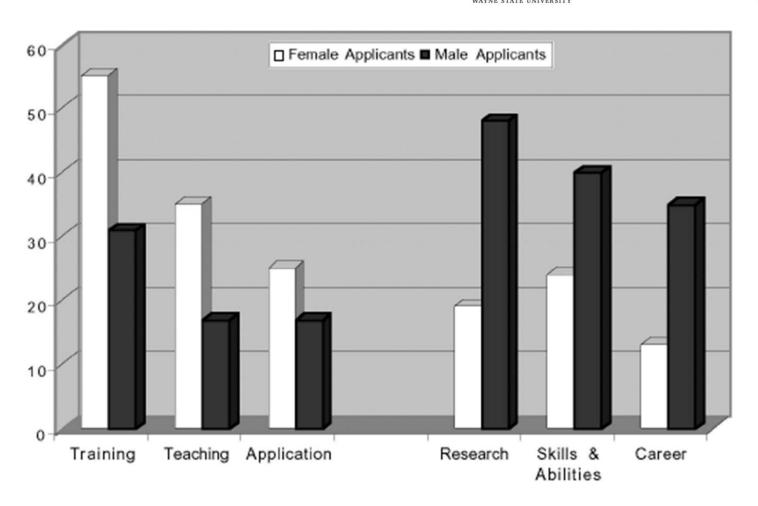
Exploring the color of glass: letters of recommendation for female and male medical faculty



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FRANCES TRIX AND CAROLYN PSENKA
WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY



In job ads

Journal of Personality and Social Psychology

© 2011 American Psychological Association 0022-3514/11/\$12.00 DOI: 10.1037/a0022530

Evidence That Gendered Wording in Job Advertisements Exists and Sustains Gender Inequality

Danielle Gaucher and Justin Friesen University of Waterloo Aaron C. Kay Duke University

- Consider how language can contribute to a sense of belongingness, appeal of job, and decisions to apply for jobs.
- Consider the use of 'masculine' and 'feminine' words when crafting job descriptions.

In job ads

Feminine Masculine

Administrative assistant

Company description

- We are a corporate team dedicated to supporting our financial clients.
- Our company is devoted to providing a great work/life balance and compensation package.

Qualifications

- Experience in providing administrative support services to a team of senior management and understand office organization.
- Polite; sensitive to needs of other employees and clients.
- Dependable and responsible.
- Capable computer skills.

Responsibilities

- Support office team and assist with departmental procedures so that work progresses more efficiently.
- Connect and develop relationships with a variety of clients (e.g., other businesses).
- · Coordinate incoming and outgoing shipments.

Company description

- Our organization works to offer every possible advantage to our banking customers
- The company boasts impressive salaries, allowing our employees with financial independence.

Qualifications

- Ability to deal with multiple senior staff in a demanding environment and navigate office hierarchy.
- Civil personality: aware of other workers' and customers' requirements.
- Independent and self-reliant.
- Strong computer skills.

Responsibilities

- Organize and monitor office tasks and processes so that work progresses more efficiently.
- Able to interface with external parties (e.g., other businesses).
- Control incoming and outgoing shipments.

In job ads

DEC 14, 2016 @ 10:42 AM

11,965 @

How To Take Gender Bias Out Of Your Job Ads













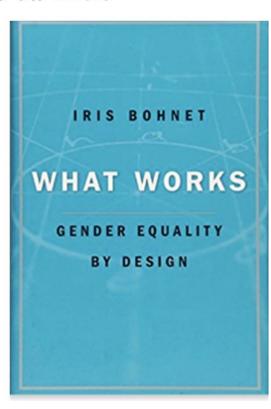
HBS Working Knowledge, CONTRIBUTOR

Business research for business leaders FULL BIO ✓

Opinions expressed by Forbes Contributors are their own.

By Carmen Nobel

- Remove (implicit) gender bias.
- Limit the number of mandatory qualifications.
- Consider using a 'gender decoder' for job ads
- http://genderdecoder.katmatfield.com



When inviting speakers

Gender disparities in colloquium speakers at top universities

Christine L. Nittrouer^{a,1}, Michelle R. Hebl^a, Leslie Ashburn-Nardo^b, Rachel C. E. Trump-Steele^a,

David M. Lane^{a,c}, and Virginia Valian^d

Author Affiliations =

Edited by Susan T. Fiske, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ, and approved November 29, 2017 (receive 2017)

Analysis of 3,652 talks in six academic disciplines

Finding: a man is more likely to give a colloquium talk at
a top 50 college or university than is a woman



"those who invite and schedule speakers serve as gender gatekeepers with the power to **create** or **reduce** gender differences in academic reputations"

When inviting speakers

Congrats!
You have an all-male panel!



 Pay attention to characteristics of prospective speakers such as gender, ethnicity, areas of research, and seniority.

When chairing a talk

- Be inclusive when calling upon people to ask questions.
- Keep track of 'question asker' characteristics (location in audience, gender, seniority, etc.) when calling upon people during the Q&A.
- (Before the event itself) Appoint women! The presence of women as colloquium chairs (and committee members) increases the likelihood of having female colloquium speakers.

In your reviews of paners/nronceals bioRxiv

HOME |

New Results

Female grant applicants are equally successful when peer reviewers assess the science, but not when they assess the scientist

Holly O Witteman, Michael Hendricks, Sharon Straus, Cara Tannenbaum doi: https://doi.org/10.1101/232868

THE PREPRINT SERVER FOR BIOLOGY

This article is a preprint and has not been peer-reviewed [what does this mean?].

 Distinguish between evaluating the <u>science</u> and evaluating the <u>principal investigator</u>.

In our writing about linguistics



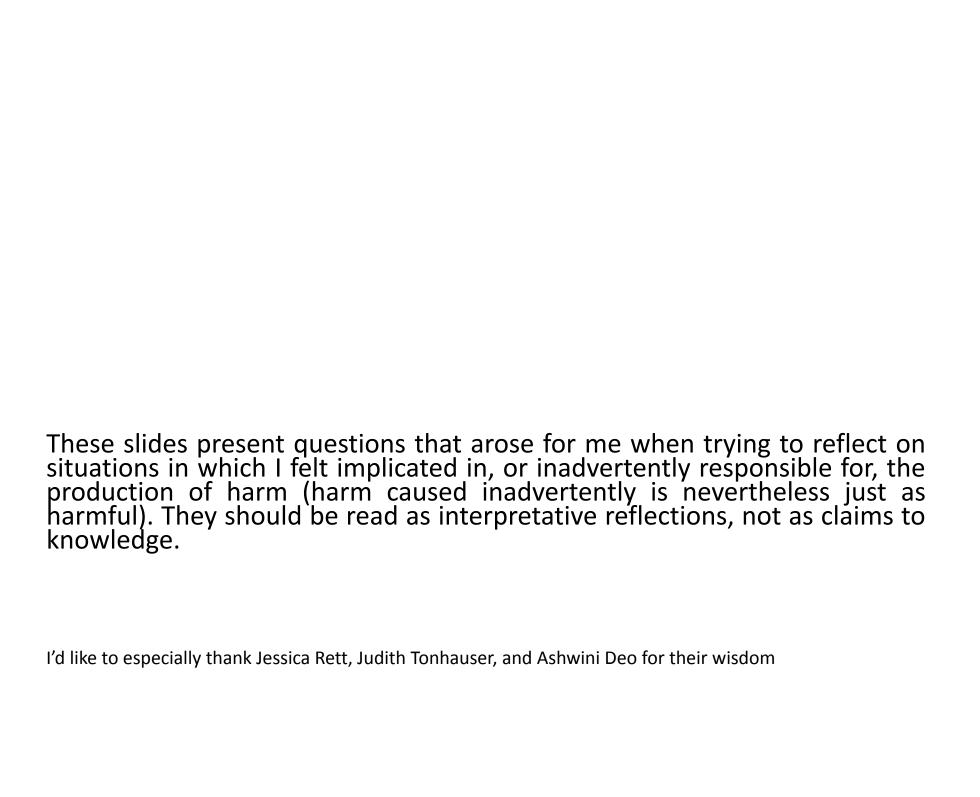
Guidelines for Inclusive Language

"Linguists can both lead the way in proactively writing inclusively and avoid past pitfalls or habits that may unintentionally lead to marginalization, offense, misrepresentation, or the perpetuation of stereotypes."

- Focus on findings, not labels of people and generics
- Use cultural sensitivity and respect when constructing examples
- Avoid institutional bias in labeling 'standard' practices/dialects
- Avoid unnecessary gendered NPs, pronouns, names

Thank you!





1. Harassment: What can we do at what level?

Institutional protections are crucial, but have proven problematic:

- Institutional interests (liability, attracting capital/prestige) do not always align with our interests as a community (protection for students, staff and faculty).
- Institutional-level handling leads to silencing on the one hand, and to collateral damage on the other.

So:

Institutional tools should be strengthened and improved rather than dismantled and DeVosed, but in the meantime, we need more communal solutions.

What can be done at a departmental level?

- We need effective ways of <u>proactively creating and maintaining</u> a good climate, and of monitoring climate
 - Periodic internal anonymized climate surveys?
 - Periodic direct communication of departmental investment in climate issues?
- Promote a conception of <u>graduate school as a work environment</u>

2. Changes to disciplinary culture that can foster inclusion

Problematic discursive ideologies

High regard for rigorous debate turns into legitimization of verbal bullying and abuse

- Ethos of myth-breaking and preaching to the ignorant masses, both about language and about linguistics.
- A-historicism (nothing exists pre-1957, nobody outside generative linguistics and Anglo-American philosophy has said anything relevant about language or grammar)
- Ideological myth of a truth-guided, impersonal research culture based solely on pitting theories against each other.

Formalocentrism¹ (and the formalpha-male)

Slippery slope from valuing formalism as a tool for analysis, to using formalism as a show of power and a tool for exclusion.

- Fetishization of formalism
- Dismissal of anything not formally stated as nonsense
- Identification of formal agility with quality/intelligence/"brilliance"
- Failure to recognize variable backgrounds

These things contribute to creating unwelcoming, and potentially hostile environments in which participation is not equally accessible

¹ When these slides were presented, I used a term here which was called out (by a person who may not want to be named here) as hostile to Latinos. I decided to refrain from using the term, especially at a time at which the Latino community is persecuted by a racist and xenophobic administration.

We can use a little more self-irony, perspective, humility, and self-reflection about our discipline

LSA Civility Panel: Power Dynamics in Linguistics We can't eat prestige and won't eat crumbs.

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https://www.linguisticsociety.org/news/2017/10/30/special-annual-meeting-session

Power Dynamics in Linguistics & Higher Education

 Particularly at the schools where linguistics is most readily taught, reflects a historical privileging of White male ideas and then the narration that we should all accept those values and norms to also be accepted.

• If not, the rhetoric goes, there will be direct consequences.

Examples of the Power Dynamic

- There are a host of topics, in particular, that aren't seen as linguistics.
- Scope of discipline, with the common exclusionary phrase "that's not linguistics"
- A popular rhetorical device among linguists to the tune of mocking those who assume linguists "speak many languages"

Power is Predicated on Fear and Exclusion

- White male supremacy, in all contexts is predicated on fear and exclusion.
- Accordingly, there is a fear quality in linguistics that belies empowerment
 - fear of doing the work you actually care about,
 - fear of saying the wrong thing,
 - fear about what job you take or who you reach out to
- These fears prevents some of the squelching of the power dynamic because people fall back on pragmatic notions of "I have to because there just aren't that many jobs."

Need for Transparent Discussions about the linguistic marketplace (ours)

 How jobs in higher education are financed, generated and brought to market

 Structural bias throughout the process down to the last negotiation

We can't eat prestige and won't eat crumbs

- There is still a lot of discourse about whether the LSA is for everyone—whether it is relevant. Whether *Language* would publish certain work. I wondered all of these things myself.
- Here at this very LSA annual meeting, I'm working with three teams of people to take these issue head on:
 - Proposed LSA statement on race
 - Collaboration in linguistics
 - Discrimination in linguistics
- All three groups are important because to disrupt this power dynamic, we need to shift and share decision making about who is privileged and how in linguistics in formative ways that will take research and effort.

A Special Note about Students & Staff

- Abuse of students and disrespect of staff should be called out for what they are: ignorance.
- Many of us are unintentionally ignorant, so we have to consciously work to mitigate that ignorance.
- Study policies of student and worker's rights—they pertain to you and your work and to the LSA.
- These matters are not tangential to us as a discipline or a society; they are the very foundation on which the study of language, communication, and humanity are laid.

Ready, Set, Go: Addressing bias in the moment

Kathryn Campbell-Kibler

DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS



READY

Work through your stuff

SET

- What happened?
- Are there targets involved?
- What is your role?

GO

- Call them in
- Shut it down
- Distract and disrupt

GET READY

Work through your stuff

"That doesn't seem racist."

"That wouldn't bother me."

"I can't believe someone would say that."

"Maybe they meant it in a nice way."

"They asked you about your genitals at work?"

"Why didn't anyone tell me about this before?"

GET SET

```
What happened?
  Who said what and why?
  Who was impacted?
Are there targets present?
  What do they need?
  Are they still vulnerable?
What is your role?
  What are the short term needs?
  What are the long term goals?
```

GO

Call them in

Shut it down

Distract and disrupt

Call them in

Ask questions: "I don't understand what you mean by "ghetto" in that context. Can you explain?"

Name your feelings: "When you used that example sentence, it made me uncomfortable."

Emphasize shared values: "I know we both want to make this a supportive environment for students."

Acknowledge the relationship: "I really value working with you."

Share your own struggles: "I have a hard time with changing pronouns, too. But it's getting easier."

Shut it down

Label the behavior: "Wow, that was pretty racist." "You just interrupted Kim."

State the social norm: "We don't comment on people's breasts in this department."

Tell them not to: "Please don't use that word."

Use non-verbal cues: gasp, stare, raised eyebrows

Distract and disrupt

Engage the target: "How is your semester going?"

Engage the speaker: "Hey, can I ask you a question

about the teaching plans for next year?"

Be present: Stay nearby.

Check in after: "Are you ok?" "You didn't do

anything wrong."

Let's get ready

Resources:

http://go.osu.edu/AddressingBias



Practice!

Meet me in the lobby tomorrow at 1pm.

Resources: Books

- Presumed Incompetent: The Intersections of Race and Class for Women in Academia. (Gutiérrez y Muhs, Flores Niemann, González, & Harris, Eds.)
- The Black Academic's Guide to Winning Tenure--Without Losing Your Soul. (Rockquemore & Laszloffy)
- It's Not Because You're Black: Addressing Issues of Racism and Underrepresentation of African Americans in Academia. (Smith)
- Trans* in College: Transgender Students' Strategies for Navigating Campus Life and the Institutional Politics of Inclusion (Nicolazzo)
- Disability in Higher Education: A Social Justice Approach (Evans, Broido, Brown, & Wilke)
- Disability as Diversity in Higher Education: Policies and Practices to Enhance Student Success (Kim & Aquino Eds.)
- Supporting College and University Students with Invisible Disabilities (Oslund)
- The Working-Class Student in Higher Education: Addressing a Class-Based Understanding (Lathe)
- Working in Class: Recognizing How Social Class Shapes Our Academic Work (Hurst & Nenga)
- Surviving Sexism in Academia: Strategies for Feminist Leadership (Cole & Hassel Eds.)
- Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation (Sue)

Resources: Articles

- Survey of Academic Field Experiences (SAFE): Trainees Report Harassment and Assault. Clancy KBH, Nelson RG, Rutherford JN, Hinde K (2014). PLOS ONE 9(7): e102172. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0102172
- Double jeopardy in astronomy and planetary science: Women of color face greater risks of gendered and racial harassment. Clancy, K. B. H., K. M. N. Lee, E. M. Rodgers, and C. Richey (2017)
 J. Geophys. Res. Planets, 122, 1610–1623, doi:10.1002/2017JE005256.
- Men ask more questions than women at a scientific conference. Hinsley A, Sutherland WJ, Johnston A (2017) PLOS ONE 12(10): e0185534. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0185534

Resources: Websites/Organizations

- Julie Libarkin's Blog
- Microaggressions project
- Chronically academic
- Conditionally Accepted

- hollaback on bystander intervention
- AFSC on bystander intervention
- A practical guide to calling in