SEXISM RESPONSE WORKSHOP
How to Respond to Micro-aggressions, Biases, and Other Nonsense

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WiCS
WOMEN IN COMPUTER SCIENCE

In support of
HeForShe
UN Women Solidarity Movement for Gender Equality
Scenario cards and many of the scenarios and sample responses come from a NCWIT Summit workshop run by Colleen Lewis, from Harvey Mudd University.

Slides are a combination of hers and mine, with attribution where appropriate.
Unconscious Bias

“Really? You don’t look like a computer scientist.”
Slight

“Congratulations on your job offer from <BigTechCompany>! They have a great diversity hiring program!”
Micro-aggressions

“You got into Waterloo because you are a girl.”
Provocation

“WICS is sexist!”
Trolling
Report Incidents

Please report

• All incidents of provocation and trolling

• All incidents of slights and bias that are committed by a UW employee (instructor, TA, co-op tutor, coach)
Colleen Lewis, “What would you say if”, NCWIT Summit 2018

Graphic Credit: American Medical Women’s Association (Photo Credit: U.S. Army)
Let’s build a toolkit of generic responses

And see what works best for you!
What makes you say that?

[Nonsense]

Colleen Lewis, “What would you say if”, NCWIT Summit 2018
I’m sorry. Can you say that again? I didn’t quite hear you.

Colleen Lewis, “What would you say if”, NCWIT Summit 2018
I think you may need a refresher on sensitivity training.
When you say [X], it suggests to me that you believe [Y]. Is this what you are saying?

[Nonsense]
Round 1 Nonsense:
Stereotypes
Scenarios

• Someone starts as the “judge”
• The judge reads the scenario (at top of card)
• In clockwise order, players answer how they would respond (players can pass)
• After 150 seconds or hearing all answers, the judge picks their favorite answer
• The winner keeps the question card
• The role of judge rotates clockwise with each question

Colleen Lewis, “What would you say if”, NCWIT Summit 2018
Debrief

Colleen Lewis, “What would you say if”, NCWIT Summit 2018
Round 2 Nonsense:
Backlash against Diversity Initiatives
Ask for Evidence

Why do you believe that is true?

[Nonsense]
Actually, studies suggest otherwise…

[\textit{Nonsense}]
Colleen Lewis, “What would you say if”, NCWIT Summit 2018

Janet Garcia

John Garcia

https://www.ncwit.org/resources/how-can-reducing-unconscious-bias-increase-women’s-success-it/how-can-reducing-unconscious
Colleen Lewis, “What would you say if”, NCWIT Summit 2018
Harvard Implicit Bias Test

Put your middle or index fingers on the E and I keys of your keyboard. Words or images representing the categories at the top will appear one-by-one in the middle of the screen. When the item belongs to a category on the left, press the E key; when the item belongs to a category on the right, press the I key. Items belong to only one category. If you make an error, an X will appear - fix the error by hitting the other key.

This is a timed sorting task. **GO AS FAST AS YOU CAN** while making as few mistakes as possible. Going too slow or making too many errors will result in an uninterpretable score. This task will take about 5 minutes to complete.

Press the **spacebar** to begin.

If you move away from the task, you may need to click inside the white border to continue.
FIGURE 16. AVERAGE SCIENCE-MALE IMPLICIT ASSOCIATION TEST SCORE, BY GENDER AND COLLEGE MAJOR

Notes: Majors are ordered from left to right by ratings of science content. A score of 0 indicates no science-male implicit bias. Lower numbers on the y-axis represent lower science-male implicit bias scores.

Source: Smyth, Greenwald et al. (2015). Adapted with permission from Frederick L. Smyth.
“Quit whining. It’s the same distance”
Diverse problem solvers outperform High-achieving similar problem solvers

- Hong and Page, “Groups of Diverse Problem Solvers can Outperform Groups of High-ability Problem Solvers”, National Academies of Science, 2004
Round 2

www.clker.com/cliparts/b/x/9/4/7/G/hand-with-card-hi.png
Colleen Lewis, “What would you say if”, NCWIT Summit 2018
Power dynamics matter!

Colleen Lewis, “What would you say if”, NCWIT Summit 2018
Whether / How Extensively to Respond?

- **Withdraw** - withdraw from the interaction
- **Smooth** – look the other way
- **Force** - use all your energy to make your point
- **Compromise** – agree to disagree
- **Confront** – engage in discussion of interpretation, impact and intent
Does this mean that you believe [nonsense about men]?
@ManWhoHasItAll

Colleen Lewis, “What would you say if”, NCWIT Summit 2018
MY DREAM: That one day boys will become anything they want to be – male oarswomen, men writers, male spacewomen, men poets and gentleman doctors.
TODAY'S DEBATE: How many men in total do we need on boards?

12:00 PM - 15 May 2018

Colleen Lewis, “What would you say if”, NCWIT Summit 2018
Round 3

www.clker.com/cliparts/b/x/9/4/7/G/hand-with-card-hi.png
Round 4:
Relationships / Dating
Flirting vs. Harassment
Can I help you with your homework?

I know more than you do.
Intent vs. Impact

Colleen Lewis, “What would you say if”, NCWIT Summit 2018
You offended me.

I’m sorry.

Colleen Lewis, “What would you say if”, NCWIT Summit 2018
Round 4
Summary of Strategies

• Clarification – ask them what they meant, where they got their ideas
• Wit – make a joke of what they said; apply their statements to them
• Honesty – communicate the impact of their statements on you
• Reason – fight myths with research results
• Withdraw – walk away
• Smooth – look the other way (might not work if problem persists)
• Compromise – agree to disagree
• Confront – explain how their statements can be (are) offensive
• Flip it to Test it – flip the gender of a statement to test its absurdity
Critical Listening Guide: Just Because You Always Hear It, Doesn't Mean It's True

Use this guide to help identify common misunderstandings that surface when people talk about how to increase the participation of women. Learn to spot "red flags" that indicate a particular discussion is headed in a direction that may not be research-based or effective.

View online.