Threats in the Air: MIST
Definitions of Terms and Constructs

All information provided are considered working/flexible definitions. Labeling and categorizing these constructs is intended to encourage open and supportive dialogue around complex ideas. Examples are by no means exhaustive and are included to provide a range of potential examples. As you engage with this worksheet – notice how your thoughts and emotions unfold.

We all move through the world and are shaped by a host of *identity contingencies*. These contingencies provide either 'reinforcement' (e.g., increase certain behaviors) or 'punishment' (e.g., decrease certain behaviors). These processes influence how we think, feel, and behave (Steele, 2010).

Most simply, there are two types of identity contingent threats – (1) 'threats on the ground' that directly block our engagement with aspects of living because of our social and cultural identities (e.g., segregated spaces, visual symbols or icons of hate) and (2) 'threats in the air' which are more subtle social and psychological processes that we passively 'breathe in' by living in the United States (see Steele, 1997; 2010).

While threats on the ground are often quite scary, they may be easier to identify and potentially interrupt because they are explicit and clearly observable. Threats in the air, on the other hand, are often subtle, pervasive, and may even be intended as a compliment. When a threat in the air occurs people are sometimes unsure of how to handle it effectively. Bringing our attention to these threats in the air, what we call MIST (see Winer et al., 2018), may help enhance our ability to navigate stigmatizing processes when we are marginalized and reduce the likelihood that we unintentionally marginalize others through our privileged 'blindfolds' (see Banaji & Greenwald, 2013).

MIST

Microaggressions	The everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to targeted persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership (e.g., Sue, 2007).
Implicit Bias	The unconscious attribution of particular qualities to a member of a certain social group. Implicit stereotypes are influenced by experience, and are based on learned associations between various qualities and social, ethnic, and cultural categories (e.g., Banaji & Greenwald, 2013).
Stereotype threat	A situational predicament (e.g., context dependent as opposed to trait specific) in which people are or feel themselves to be at risk of conforming to stereotypes (i.e., historical and culture bound assumptions) about their social or cultural group (e.g., Steele, 2010).
Targeted identities	Social and cultural identities with historically less power and less access in their given context. 'Dominant identities' are identities with historically more power and access in their given context (e.g., Hays, 2016).

Navigating the MIST

Microaggressions	
How or when does this process influence how you think, feel, and behave? How or when does this process influence how others may think, feel, and behave towards you? How often do you think about this process? (rate 1-5) 1 = not at all, 5 = all the time	
Implicit Bias	
How or when does this process influence how you think, feel, and behave? How or when does this process influence how others may think, feel, and behave towards you? How often do you think about this process? (rate 1-5) 1 = not at all, 5 = all the time	
Stereotype threat	
How or when does this process influence how you think, feel, and behave? How or when does this process influence how others may think, feel, and behave towards you? How often do you think about this process? (rate 1-5) 1 = not at all, 5 = all the time	

Targeted identities	
How or when does this process influence how you think, feel, and behave?	
How or when does this process influence how others may think, feel, and behave towards you?	
How often do you think about this process? (rate 1-5) 1 = not at all, 5 = all the time	

One action step I can take in my life to more effectively navigate MIST which could (1) help reduce my suffering, and/or (2) help reduce the suffering of others:

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References

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Hays, P. (2016). *Addressing cultural complexities in practice: Assessment diagnosis, and therapy. 3rd Edition.* American Psychological Association. Washington, DC, USA.

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