

The Davidson Microaggressions Project: From Vision to Action

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Microaggressions

defined:

“...the everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership.”

~ Derald Wing Sue, 2018, p. 22

*Microaggressions, Marginality, and
Oppression.*

3 Types of Microaggressions

Microassaults: “... are *consciously biased* beliefs or attitudes that are held by individuals and intentionally expressed or acted out overtly or covertly toward a marginalized person or socially devalued group.” -p. 24

Microinsults: “... are subtle snubs often *unconsciously* disguised as a compliment or positive statement directed towards the target person or group.” -p. 25

~ Derald Wing Sue, 2018, *Microaggressions, Marginality, and Oppression.*



But I don't
see color!
We're all
just
humans.



Sugar-
coated
insults!

Microinvalidations: “... are similar to microinsults in that they generally occur *outside the level of conscious awareness of perpetrators*. However, this form of microaggression is perhaps the most insidious, damaging, and harmful form, because microinvalidations directly attack or deny the experiential realities of socially devalued groups. They accomplish this goal through interpersonal and environmental cues that exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and experiences of the target group.”

MICROAGGRESSIONS AGAINST WHITE PEOPLE?



DECODED



“You intimidate me” as a Microaggressive Controlling Image to Discipline Womyn of Color Faculty

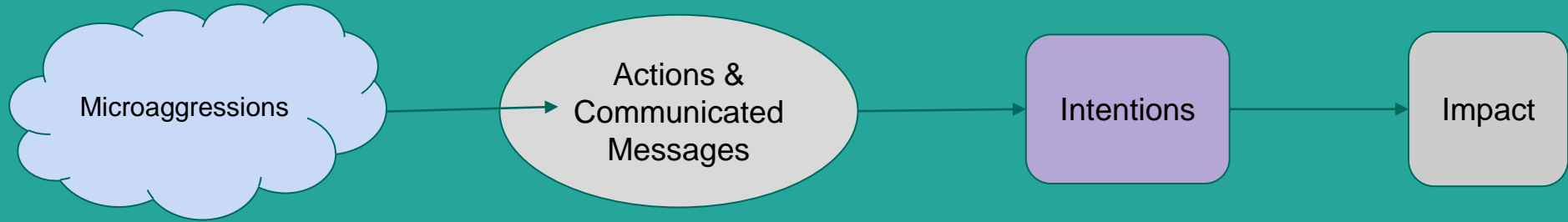
“Perhaps the microaggressive controlling image is one way of colonizing in order to subdue women of color faculty... intersectional microaggressions are as much about the totality of identities that variously position individuals in dominant and subordinate roles in the ivory tower as they are about the intersecting nature of a controlling image, power, and context.” -Holling, 2018, p. 10-11.

Communicating Racism: A Study of Racial Microaggressions in a Southern University and the Local Community

“RMAs are inherently an interpersonal communication phenomenon. Verbal and nonverbal messages are hallmarks of what constitutes communication... a type of negative interracial communication.”

-Harris et al., 2018, p. 3.

Response types students of color believe are important: racial distancing, denial, interracial paradigm shift, forced racial consciousness, coping, racial enlightenment, & confrontation.



Activity - small groups or pairs

*Activity from “Breaking the Prejudice Habit”

<http://www.breakingprejudice.org/teaching/group-activities/microaggression-activity/>

Discussion Questions:

1) When people discuss microaggressions, a common response is that they are “innocent acts” and that the person who experiences them should “let go of the incident” and “not make a big deal out of it.” Do you agree or disagree with this point of view? Explain.

2) If a person from a marginalized group pointed out to you that one of your comments was a microaggression, how would you respond at the time? Would it change the likelihood of your making a similar comment in the future? Why or why not?

From Vision to Action:
Making the Invisible Visible

<http://davidsonmicroaggressionsproject.org/>

Davidson College

Examples



“Pronouns”

Microaggressions around correct usage of pronouns and preferred/chosen names are frequently committed by faculty and students at Davidson. Some professors openly mock the use of gender-neutral pronouns, refuse to use them, etc. In a similar vein, there is an assumption that if someone understands what a pronoun is, they are automatically being inclusive in their language and actions, which is incorrect and often harmful.

“First in My Family”

A faculty member told me I was brave for “admitting” I was the first in my family to go to college. I do not understand why this fact is an admission rather than a statement. Should I be “admitting” other personal circumstances over which I had no control such as my eye color or where I was born? Initially, I was proud of my academic accomplishments, but getting to Davidson taught me it is a stigma. Many exceptionally well-meaning individuals here expect first-gens will fail and struggle more, which is contrary to my demonstrated successes. I now try to hide my status from most faculty members, preventing at least one way for them to think less of me.

Community Context Considerations

Why the Davidson Microaggressions
Project?



Why *now*?

Disrupting Our Davidson Bubble



[School Newspaper Article](#)

NEWS

BILL KRISTOL, AUTHOR, SCHOLAR AND FORMER WHITE HOUSE ADVISOR, TO JOIN DAVIDSON AS VISITING ETHICS PROFESSOR

December 17, 2018



William "Bill" Kristol, 2019 Visiting Vann Professor of Ethics in Society

Resolved & Ongoing Challenges

Actions Taken:

- 1) Possibilities for backlash
- 2) Anonymity & confidentiality
- 3) Calling out as calling in
- 4) Discussion opportunities
- 5) Solutions and/or “best practices”
- 6) Keeping the project open to evolving new directions as it grows with time, attention, interest, and new contributors & collaborators.

Big picture considerations:

What challenges or hidden controversies do you see in your own community-based work?
How have you handled them?

Q&A

*Thank you for attending
our session!*
