Institutional Climates and Women Faculty of Color: Overcoming Aversive Racism and Microaggressions in the Academy[1]

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Diversity and inclusion statistics in higher education today point to a sobering reality: while the academy has seen success in the drive to recruit students of color, it struggles to build comparable ethnic and racial diversity among faculty. This gap is likely only to grow. Demographics signal that we will see increasing student diversity in future, but we have little reason to think that faculty diversity will keep pace. As the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) 2018 report on diversity among college faculty shows that faculty of color, and particularly women of color, continue to be remarkably underrepresented in the academy.[2]

In a further break down of these numbers, the NCES report mostly reaffirms the pattern whereby the number of college faculty of color and women shrink further with advancing rank. In Fall 2017, male and female American Indian/ Alaska Natives and faculty claiming two or more races comprised less than 1% each of two ranks: full professors and assistant professors. Black females comprised 2% of full professors and 4% of assistant professors. Hispanic females comprised less than 1% of full professors and 3% of assistant professors. Asian/Pacific Islander females comprised 3% of full professors and 6% of assistant professors. White females comprised 27% of full professors and 38% of assistant professors. Similar patterns emerge when the number of male college faculty is broken down by race and ethnicity. Black males comprised 2% of full professors and 3% of assistant professors. Hispanic males comprised 2% of full professors and 3% of assistant professors. Asian/Pacific Islander males comprised 8% of full professors and 7% of assistant professors. White males comprised 54% of full professors and 34% of Assistant Professors.

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[1] This paper grew from remarks I offered at a Roundtable on Diversity and Excellence at the Susan Bulkeley Butler Center for Leadership Excellence on April 24, 2019. I thank Dr. Mangala Subramaniam, the Chair and Director of the Butler Center, for organizing this excellent ongoing series and inviting me to submit a working paper based on my presentation and feedback. Thanks also to my fellow panelists for their powerful presentations, and to the audience for its feedback and lively discussion. Finally, my deepest thanks also to Nancy Peterson, Marcia Stephenson, and Mangala Subramaniam, for their invaluable commentary and suggestions on several drafts of this working paper.
[2] The National Center for Education Statistics report on "Fast Facts: Race/Ethnicity of College Faculty" offers the following key facts: "Of all full-time faculty in degree-granting postsecondary institutions in fall 2017, 41 percent were White males; 35 percent were White females; 6 percent were Asian/Pacific Islander males; 5 percent were Asian/Pacific Islander females; and 3 percent each were Black males, Black females, Hispanic males, and Hispanic females. Those who were American Indian/Alaska Native and those who were of two or more races each made up 1 percent or less of full-time faculty."

We cannot assume that faculty diversity will grow in proportion to student diversity. Worse, we cannot be sure even that we can hang on to the gains of the past. Stephanie Shields notes that "[w]hatever our victories, constant vigilance is needed to prevent not only our own backsliding but regression by the institution itself." Shields cites three examples of such institutional backsliding: the decision by the University of California system to cut back on the hiring of faculty of color in response to legislation undermining affirmative action; the phenomenon whereby "old gender-based inequities reappear within a few years of administrative correction"; and the "equally chilling […] fact that gains in diversifying faculty composition can vanish almost overnight" (2012:38). In his contribution to the collection *Black Faculty in the Academy*, Mark Giles voices a similar concern about the revolving-door hiring of faculty of color in higher education. He asks, "[A]s long as institutions loudly and publicly proclaim their good intentions (i.e., diversity missions, goals, and initiatives), do they really have to show meaningful and measurable results? If so, then to whom are they ultimately accountable?" (2015:20).

At predominantly white institutions (henceforth PWIs), the goal of achieving excellence through diversity calls for ongoing vigilance, as Shields implies above; it calls also for institutions to wean themselves from mere optics of the kind described by Giles (2015), and replace them with meaningful self-accountability. In this working paper, I look at forms of racism and sexism on campus that tend to fly under the radar and thus make it more difficult for institutions and individuals to be vigilant and hold ourselves accountable. Specifically, I examine the paradigms of aversive racism and microaggressions and the toxicity they can infuse into institutional climates. I offer both non-academic and academic instances and examples of various categories of anti-diversity behavior. I then go on to trace the impact on faculty of color of this behavior, and conclude with some thoughts on what efforts, at both the institutional and the individual level, can push back against aversive racism and microaggressions.

In keeping with Susan Bulkeley Butler Center's mission to foster women's academic leadership and female faculty success, as well as the excellent preparatory readings that were suggested for our roundtable, my particular concern here is with women faculty of color, a category within which I include non-Caucasian faculty from various nations of origin, making further distinctions between U.S.-born and non-U.S. born faculty as needed. In addition, while race- and gender-diversity are my primary focus in this paper, my thoughts on these issues have evolved over time with references to multiple forms of diversity (having to do with class, cis-gendering, sexuality, and ability, to name a few). I will refer to these other underrepresented (henceforth URM) faculty on occasion.

Campus Climate and Aversive Racism

In their impressive, large-scale and probing study of "Racial privilege in the Professoriate," Uma Jayakumar et al. reach one particularly troubling conclusion: "not only does a negative racial climate impede job satisfaction for faculty of color, but, conversely, a negative racial climate is also associated with greater retention for White faculty" (2009:555).[3] This academic version of white flight raises an unavoidable question: do white faculty, in significant numbers, feel personally disadvantaged when the institutional climate improves for racial others? Do they see

[3] This essay was recommended as preparatory reading for the diversity roundtable.

diversity through a zero-sum lens, where gains for any one group can be imagined only as a loss for others? Such reasoning directly counters lessons that have emerged from within URM disciplines and activism themselves. For example, disability scholars emphasize that efforts to accommodate the needs of one disadvantaged group typically result in improved accommodations for all groups. White faculty fleeing an institution primarily because it has become more welcoming to faculty of color clearly do not buy into this logic.

We need more research fully to understand the scale of, and motivation behind, academic white flight, but if it is indeed a statistically significant and ongoing response to increasing diversity and inclusion, it might be explained in part through the theory of "aversive racism." Samuel Gaertner and John Dovidio (2005) trace the term to Joel Kovel, who in 1970 proposed a distinction between **dominant racism** or overt bigotry, and **aversive racism**, where the racism goes underground in order not to threaten the racist's cherished self-image as unprejudiced. Gaertner and Dovidio suggest that aversive racism thrives in societies and institutions that commit to "central principles of equality and fairness," but cannot or will not counter "the daily operation of systematic prejudice and discrimination, at an individual and societal level" (2005:617). Unlike dominant racists, aversive racists consciously subscribe to the diversity and inclusion ideals proclaimed by their communities or institutions or nation; they therefore find it difficult to name, confront, or fight their own prejudice and racial animus. The distance between their professed beliefs and their unacknowledged racism causes them "anxiety and discomfort," to the point that "interracial interaction" of any kind becomes difficult and they "try to avoid it" (2005:619). Academic white flight could arguably be seen as a dramatically avoidant form of aversive racism. Gaertner and Dovidio point to a second connotation of aversiveness at work here: given that aversive racists groups "consciously embrace egalitarian ideals, [they] would find aversive any thought or indication that they might be racist" (2005:619).

What is the impact of aversive racism on faculty of color in PWIs? I believe it is remarkably shortsighted to deem aversive racism a relatively mild and less damaging form of racism than its counterpart, dominant racism. Gaertner and Dovidio emphasize that "the consequences of aversive racism (e.g., the restriction of economic opportunity) are as significant and pernicious as those of the traditional, overt form" (2005:618). The material impact of aversive racism has been clearly documented, for example in research on inequities in workplaces. For diversity and inclusion to flourish in these spaces, we must also continue to focus on the psychological and physical toll aversive racism takes on people of color.

As a quick example of one such impact, let me mention "credentialing," the process whereby aversive racists occasionally enlist people of color into crediting them as non-racists. In my experience, it is the aversive racists' state of denial that drives them to seek such credentialing. I have been subject to this process to a limited extent, and find it dispiriting: for one thing, it leaves me wondering if my friendship or presence is sought mainly because I can be put to this use; for another, I know that in endorsing the aversive racists' state of denial, I would be in effect endorsing the racism itself. It feels insulting even being asked. And that is when, as a faculty member born outside the U.S. and belonging to a so-called model minority, my approbation is not as valuable as that of faculty who have suffered a longer generational history of racial trauma in the United States. I have witnessed the silent call for credentialing being directed far more frequently to U.S. born faculty of color, and have often thought about the emotional labor it must

entail for these colleagues. I believe that call is louder in institutions that make unequivocal commitment to diversity and inclusion, such as public universities, but have been unable to address aversive racism in their community. In these contexts, especially, being *called* racist is sometimes deemed more hostile and antisocial than actually *acting* racist.

In the academy, the phenomenon of aversive racism might explain not merely academic white flight but also many apparently trivial, often invisible, and everyday ways in which some among an advantaged majority can—consciously or unconsciously—undermine efforts to improve the climate for diversity and inclusion. My own experience has been for the most part mild given my membership in a department and discipline that has been relatively welcoming of difference, especially over the last two decades, but I certainly have often witnessed and occasionally been subjected to these phenomena elsewhere. In what follows, I will look at the paradigm of microaggressions, which invites us to probe that apparently trivial phenomenon.

From Aversive Racism to Microaggressions

The theory of microaggressions helps us get to the core of the everyday acts of racial hostility discussed above, or the recurring and apparently trivial ways diversity and inclusion can be undermined. The term was coined by Chester M. Pierce, the African American Harvard psychiatrist, as early as 1977, and the theory itself continues to be elaborated and fine-tuned. In 1977, analyzing TV commercials featuring African Americans, Chester M. Pierce et al. found a series of "subtle, stunning, often automatic and non-verbal exchanges" that functioned as "put-downs of blacks." They term such exchanges "microaggressions." They note also that however "subtle" the microaggression, its impact was far from trivial; the "cumulative weight" of microaggressions produced a sense of "never-ending burdens" (1977:65). Two decades later, Derald Wing Sue Chinese American Professor of Psychology at Teacher's College, Columbia University, along with a team of scholars (2007) analyzed microaggressions in contemporary real life settings, including white-collar contexts. In their most recent discussion of the term, Sue et al. define microaggressions as "everyday slights, putdowns, invalidations, invalidations that people of color experience in their daily interactions with well-meaning White Americans who may be unaware that they have engaged in racially demeaning ways" (2019:129). In these recent writings, Sue et al. also clear up the confusion surrounding the term and perhaps resulting from the fact that it, unlike aversive racism, is tossed around frequently in popular media. Most of the confusion has to do with the prefix "micro." Sue et al. clarify that, following the usage of Pierce et al., "micro" does not signal that the aggression is lighter, or more unintentional, or less damaging than other forms of racial aggression; instead, "micro" signals that the aggression is "everyday" (2019:131). Recognizing this I hope demonstrates the falsity of the choice between macro and microaggressions—and the implication that in focusing on microaggressions we are inflating trivialities and neglecting weightier ("macro") forms of racism. The distinction between micro and macro aggressions rests not on how damaging, blatant, conscious or intentional, the aggression is—but rather on how commonplace it has become. Worth noting here is that the very *everyday* nature of microaggressions ensures that they can easily be normalized and then routinely overlooked. An institution overtly committed to nondiscrimination, such as the U.S. academy, is fortunately likely to have measures in place to counter highly visible and no longer normalized acts of racial hostility. However, in my experience, most such PWIs (and well-meaning individuals) have not equipped themselves to handle or sufficiently prioritize more easily normalized, trivialized, and invisibilized acts of racial hostility. namely, microaggressions.

In the 2007 article in which they elaborate Pierce's study, Sue et al. divide microaggressions into three categories, microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations, thus offering us a finer and more discerning lens to understand acts of racial hostility. Below, I will outline Sue et al.'s definitions of these terms, and follow them with examples drawn from both non-academic and academic contexts. A careful look at microaggressions can give us a sense of what we are up against when it comes to hostile institutional climates.

The first category of microaggressions in Sue et al.'s schema is that of **microassaults**, which comprise "explicit racial derogation […] a verbal or nonverbal attack meant to hurt the intended victim" (2007:274). Given that perpetrators here are well aware of their hostile intent, microassaults come close to "dominant racism" in Gaertner and Dovidio's schema. Examples of non-academic microassaults are easy to find, especially given the public and media attention they have attracted over the last three years. Especially today, cell-phone evidence has called attention to multiple well-documented attacks fueled by white racial resentment, including the verbal abuse and gratuitous reporting to the police of strangers of color who are merely occupying public spaces such as parking lots and grocery stores.

Many still consider such experiences unlikely on campus colleges, but that is far from the case. Notwithstanding the academy's frequent declarations of its commitment to diversity and inclusion, these acts of hostility have not even been forced underground even those that *can* be traced to the aggressor. As Purdue graduate student Rachel Scarlett has detailed in her contribution to the Working Paper Series, she was subjected to the gratuitous-reporting form of microassault on campus. She adds, "These are the common, and for some, daily incidents of surveillance that students of color deal with as we enter academic spaces" (2018:8). It is not only non-academics who somehow find their way to campus and perpetrate microassaults. At the time of writing, a tenured academic at a neighboring university has been widely broadcasting his openly racist, misogynistic, and homophobic views on social media. Evidently welcoming the notoriety that has resulted for himself and his university, and undeterred by public reprimands from upper administration, this person clearly embraces the role of serial microassaulter and anti-diversity *provocateur*. An equally striking example of microassaults in the academy comes from one of the articles recommended for our roundtable. Chavella Pittman's "Racial Microaggressions: The Narratives of African American Faculty at a Predominantly White Institution" (2012) is particularly illuminating on campus climate and microaggressions, addressing how African American male and female faculty contended with such hostility at an R1 midwestern PWI university.[4] Pittman quotes an African American faculty respondent, who noted "there are a lot of Whites on campus who are tired of thinking about African Americans. […] these Whites' sentiment toward African Americans is, 'You've been thought about, and changed, and apologized to. Enough of that sh!% [expletive]'" (2012:87). In the kind of microassaults mentioned above, the assaulters flaunt their aggression, seeking notoriety.

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[4] Researchers interviewed seven male and seven female African American faculty at a large R1 (Pittman 2012:86). Transcripts from the 1-2 hour long interviews were then studied "line by line" (86). Together, they showed instance upon instance of black faculty being subjected to negative person-to-person interactions and hostile campus climates.

But not all microassaults occur in the open. More than a decade ago, a lesbian colleague found a homophobic poster had been taped inside her locked office during a weekend. Such acts of hostility have been with us for a long time, although arguably the last three years have seen virulent outbreaks of anonymous microassaults in many institutions. At Purdue, faculty and students report walking into early morning classes and finding desks arranged in the shape of swastikas; overnight white supremacist posters go up around campus, and racist slurs are spray-painted on university buildings and sidewalks.

Let me note here, that because of the high visibility and outrage mobilized by microassaults, institutions can, if they choose, spring into action to counter them, for example, by ensuring protection for vulnerable groups. However, and especially in the last three years, many PWIs, including my own, have often failed this test. Highly disturbing in nature, micoassaults can potentially be countered through tried and true methods. Unfortunately, few tried and true methods seem available at an institutional level to counter the next two categories of microaggressions.

The second category of microaggressions in Sue et al.'s schema is **microinsults,** which comprises "subtle snubs, frequently unknown to the perpetrator, but clearly convey[ing] a hidden insulting message" (2007:274). Ambiguity enters the picture here: the aggressors might not be aware of the insult in their own action (unlikely though that seems), but if so, *something* is "clearly" conveying the hidden insult, with the aggressor serving as conduit. That something can be unconsciously held beliefs and prevailing ideologies. Outside the academy, an often cited microinsult is the act of clutching one's belongings tightly in the presence of URMs, or (with a hint of surprise) calling a person of color "articulate." Examples of microinsults in the academy include those occasions when a URM faculty member is disparaged as an "affirmative action hire." Nearly three decades ago I learned of a senior faculty questioning whether African American studies were "too specialized" be accepted by the Liberal Arts tenure committee as a legitimate field. Such ignorance might seem unthinkable today, and yet we still come across entire URM fields of scholarship being dismissed as facile and "trendy," with the implication that they lack scholarly worth. Unlike microassaults, such acts are less likely to arouse institutional concern and dismissed as individual aberration rather than a systemic problem; the fact that they might be unconscious is illogically taken to mean their impact is trivial.

Sue et al.'s third and final category, **microinvalidations**, comprises acts that "exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of a person of color" (2007:274). Familiar examples of microinvalidations outside the academy include the belief still held in certain quarters (though possibly voiced less often) that women are too subject to hormonal fluctuation to hold higher office such as the presidency of the United States. The MeToo movement has given us many variants of microinvalidations, when a victim's testimony is dismissed on the grounds that she was too emotionally overwrought to speak credibly on what happened to her. The very theory of microaggressions has been challenged on similar grounds: that from their position at the receiving end, victims lack the objectivity required to identify microaggressions— which, of course, is a microinvalidation in itself. Women and people of color frequently report having their comments ignored in official venues, only to see their colleagues applauding those same observations when voiced a few minutes later by their male and/or white colleagues—a microinvalidation we encounter both in and out of the academy.

Turning to specifics in the academy, I have come to believe that microinvalidations—the devaluing and ignoring of the minority target's expertise, learning, qualifications, and emotions—might be the most common microaggression; sometimes working in tandem with the other two. The microassault noted in Pittman's (2012) study and cited above, for example, functions also as a microinvalidation: when white faculty declare that there has been "enough" apologizing for racial injustice, they are unselfconsciously appointing themselves the final arbiters of how much justice is enough, and not conceding that victims of racism have a say—let alone the last word—on this question (2012:87). Another microinsult doubling as a microinvalidation is still common in the academy: women faculty, myself included, find our professional titles ignored in situations where they are clearly warranted. For example, in the classroom, undergraduates sometimes automatically address women faculty with PhDs by first name, or with the title of Miss or Mrs. rather than Professor or Doctor; in these same spaces, white male graduate students (noticeably at a much earlier stage of their careers) are addressed as Professors. My contemporaries and I have encountered this microinvalidation from the start of our careers, sought to dispel it, and still come across it (though over time we seem to have been promoted from "Miss" or "Ms." to "Mrs."). Microinvalidations come also from those who, unlike the students, cannot plead ignorance as an excuse. In the 1980s, when recognition for African American feminist studies was gaining ground, Black female academics sometimes had a peculiar response to papers they presented at academic conferences. White self-professed feminists in the audience would approach them after the talk to request their bibliographies as separate documents, but not the papers themselves. The field evidently was exciting enough for these attendees to want to appear knowledgeable in it, and perhaps even to teach, read and write about it. They saw Black presenters as providing a shortcut and passport to the "raw materials" they needed, in effect positioning the latter as their unpaid and uncredited research assistants—rather than fellow-scholars whose hard-earned expertise was worth seeking in itself. These and other microinvalidations spring from the same logic that discounts women's and faculty of color's knowledge, professional expertise, and accomplishments in more consequential moments in their professional lives, including publishing and tenure. Perhaps such microinvalidations appear trivial and isolated at first. But, as I suggest below, their impact, along with that of other microaggressions, is considerable and pernicious.

The Impact of Microaggressions

How can we assess the effect of ongoing microaggressions on faculty of color? Impact is the frontier on which microaggression theory has met with its greatest resistance. In their latest publication on microaggressions, Sue et al. quote from and take on various responsese to their paradigm, including an irritated dismissal of the theory as "macrononsense," a paternalistic concern that microaggressions tempt people of color to "catastrophize," and, finally, a trivializing claim that they do not stem from power differentials or racism—and are indeed no worse than ordinary "incivilities" of the kind that we must learn to shrug off (2019:129). In response, Sue et al. cite extensive research addressing the "constant, continual […] and cumulative" damage that microaggressions can inflict on the victim's physical and mental health, emotional well-being, and self-esteem (2019:130).

Because of their mundane nature, microaggressions seem unremarkable, and this in turn makes it difficult to appreciate their full impact. Their subtlety, their mechanical iteration, and their

everyday rather than extraordinary modus operandi together ensure that microinsults and microinvalidations in particular can fly under the radar, appear unintentional and harmless, and get easily normalized. This also makes it possible for them to be "easily dismissed and glossed over" (Sue et al. 2007:273). Finally, their apparent inconsequentiality means they can be continually repeated without arousing concern or notice.

An equally important reason the impact of microaggressions is underestimated the unsettling ambiguity and inconclusiveness that surrounds them. Because they can seem "automatic" (Pierce et al. 1977:65), and "unconsciously delivered" (Sue et al. 2007:273), they confer a cover, a kind of plausible deniability, on the aggressor. Microaggressors know consciously or unconsciously to launch an aggression only when its motivation can be blurred- and when it can be explained away as benign: in other words, when an explanation other than racism can plausibly be claimed for the act. Gaertner and Dovidio note that "an aversive racist can justify or rationalize a negative response on the basis of some factor other than race" (2005:620). Caught off-guard by the microaggression's "sudden" eruption in the middle of an ostensibly non-hostile space—sometimes a space they share professionally or socially with the aggressor—victims are left uncertain about the intent of the aggressor, and often further nonplussed by "the nagging question of whether it really happened" (Sue et al 2007:275-6). Those doubts in turn undermine the ground from which they can call out and confront the microaggression. All responses become unsatisfying and tinged with self-blame. If the targets of microaggressions confront the microaggressor without being quite sure about the intent, they might feel they are overreacting (and then wonder if they are feeding the stereotype of people of color as oversensitive, inexplicably and permanently angry).[5] If they choose *not* to speak, they might blame themselves for cowardice in letting an offense slide and not intervening in a powerful racist discourse that could inflict harm on other vulnerable people.

All of this is what makes microaggressions so debilitating—indeed, "stunning" (Pierce et al. 1977:65; Sue et al. 2007:273). Sue et al. memorably and convincingly describe their cumulative impact as a "sapping [of] psychic and spiritual energies" (2007:275-6). They reiterate this point in their more recent work: the "bombardment" of microaggressions culminates in "racial battle fatigue" (2019:128).

To understand the impact of microaggressions on faculty of color, institutions and individuals need to seek out and hear directly from those impacted. Recent studies such as *Presumed Incompetent: The Intersections of Race and Class for Women in Academia* (2012), edited by Gabriella Gutiérrez y Muhs et al., and *Black Faculty in the Academy,* edited by Fred Bonner II et al. (2015), are exemplary collections of narratives by those impacted, and they focus directly on

[5] In this connection, see Mangala Subramaniam's 2018 contribution to this Working Paper series. Subramaniam addresses the demand for "niceness" placed on women academics of color, and the false interpretation of their demeanour as permanently angry. She writes, "The seriousness that some women of color convey in their interactions is described negatively as having 'rolled her eyes' or 'looks angry' (similar to the well-known description of the 'angry black woman') because they do not fit in with the normative notion of 'niceness'" (2018:8).

the experience of the oppressed rather than the motivation of the oppressor.[6] To convey just a glimpse of the painful impact of microaggressions, let me invoke Angela Mae Kupenda's contribution to the y Muhs collection, and the diagnosis her mother offered for her feelings of utter exhaustion in the academy:

> You are so tired because you feel like a clown. You smile when you do not feel like smiling. You bite your tongue and make no sound when you want to speak. You try to make the casual and watchful observers so comfortable with you, but now you are uncomfortable with this false self (2012:23).

Reading accounts such as this can be transformative for all, including those who trivialize the impact of microaggressions.

Pushing Back

For the various reasons cited above, microaggressions are difficult to recognize and counter. The first step to doing so, in my view, is to keep our focus on targets, and stop fixating on the intentions of the aggressors. Given that microaggressions can occur without the aggressor's awareness or willingness to own the act, I believe that the question of intent matters only if our primary concern is providing some kind of credentialing for the aggressor. Given also the debilitating impact of microaggressions irrespective of the perpetrator's intent, our focus should be on witnessing the damage, and supporting acts of recovery. Much as with the fake outrage over political correctness in the 90s, we obsess over the intent of aggressors at the risk of ignoring the cost to the target.

Let me offer a few additional suggestions on how institutions and individuals can push back against microaggressions. Institutionally, pro-diversity measures must continue to be a direct focus not just in recruitment, hiring, promotion, and retention, but also in pedagogy, research, administration faculty and personnel development. Administrators must anticipate that new visibility for faculty of color, the kind that comes with recognition and awards, for instance, could produce new racial resentment. For this and similar reasons, faculty of color must have access to safe grievance procedures, including anonymous reporting, as redress for microaggressions as much as for overt racism. Above all, the academy must remain true to its mission of generating learning and knowledge, and place a priority on supporting research on racism and diversity. It is important to note that though they might *appear* interpersonal, microaggressions draw from systemic racism—a racism that manifests not just in individual psyches but also in institutional structures, such as those of the academy. Therefore the academy must be especially mindful of institutionalized racism within its own walls. On a more positive note, it must also carefully track and record the specific forms of excellence that a diverse faculty has achieved for the institution: how it has impacted research, pedagogy, mentoring, outreach, and other missions.

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[6] Though my focus in this working paper is on race- and gender-based diversity, let me briefly note that microaggression theory, developed in the context of race, now is invoked in multiple arenas, including gender, LGBTQA, class, trans, and ability-related diversity and inclusion. Life-narratives that can challenge invisible and normalized privilege must be sought for all forms of diversity. In this connection, see Brianne Dávila and Francis Walker.

On the question of what individuals can do to counter microaggressions, let me turn to Sue et al.'s (2019) recent concept of "microinterventions, the strategic goals of which are to (a) make the 'invisible visible,' (b) disarm the microaggression, (c) educate the offender about the metacommunications they send and (d) seek external support when needed" (2019:124). Those who have suffered microaggressions and bring their own painful experience to visibility do difficult and important work for diversity, almost always at a cost to themselves. However, they should not be carrying this burden alone. Sue et al. emphasize the importance of "bystanders" and witnesses, who by intervening can transform themselves into allies when they do (2019:131). Ally groups do not claim membership in a minority group; indeed they apparently belong to, and are able to pass in, the majority. It is from this very position of privileged and comfortable invisibility that they can educate those who share their privilege. Allies stand beside those who struggle, and speak up when the latter cannot do so without risk to themselves. Sue et al. note that allies are impelled not only by their commitment to social justice, but also by a desire "to end the social disparities from which they reap unearned benefits" (2019:132). Their support can make a difference. As Scarlett points put, "Everyday practices that foster inclusion are not always implicit. At times, explicit validation of my value as an intellectual can counteract my feelings of 'otherness'" (2018:9). I would add that the intersectionality of our identities means that each of us can potentially provide, and benefit from, such validation. Each of us potentially belongs to some majorities and some minorities and is therefore in a powerful position to serve as an ally in some contexts, even when we are the targets of others. Solidarity is needed as much today as ever.

Conclusion

In this working paper, I have argued that while the U.S. academy unequivocally commits to diversity and inclusion, it has not solved the problem of hostile institutional racial climates. The gap between the ideal and its execution, as noted earlier, creates optimal conditions for aversive racism and microaggressions, two contemporary and formidable faces of racism. I have suggested that though they tend to be trivialized, the effect of these racisms on victims—and on the institutional drive for diversity—is damaging. Those fighting microaggressions and racism today frequently experience sheer exhaustion, a term that has appeared a few times in this essay and is also a running motif in current discussions of diversity and inclusion on campus.

For example, in a September 2018 issue of *The Chronicle for Higher Education*, Mariam B. Lam, a faculty member and administrator at U.C. Riverside, identified the phenomenon of "diversity fatigue" in the academy even among "those most committed to diversity work"—and even in an institution such as hers, which is known as "one of the most racially diverse" campuses in the U.S. Lam urges an overhaul of how we think about diversity and inclusion: "Meaningful diversity work cannot be seen as something that is supplemental or remedial, or touted only in times of crisis or promotion. Diversity is not philanthropy. For diversity work to thrive, it needs to be part of everyday life on campus — for everybody" (Lam 2018).

Without taking aversive racism and microaggressions seriously, the academy cannot begin to answer the important questions that Lam raises. How can we forge meaningful institutional change and refuse to settle for individualized contrition and *mea-culpas*? How else can we ensure that diversity more than survives in some corner of the academy—and that it actually thrives as the "everyday" experience of all? What can help us recognize diversity not as

"philanthropy" for some, but rather a boon for "everybody"? A pressing need today is to create conditions for faculty of color to speak freely to these very questions, and to learn to listen when they do.

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