

CREATING INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENTS THROUGH MICRO-SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

Teresa Graham Brett, JD

Associate Dean of Students for Inclusion and Multicultural
Engagement

CALS ASPIRATIONAL CULTURE

"Be the most sought-after place to be a part of"

- Have a culture of "service with partnership" and, from staff in service units, an aspiration to create advocates.
- Have culture of service leadership, enablement and the "inverted triangle" with CALS administrators.
- Establish a culture of respect for all three mission areas and all job titles
- Zero tolerance for illegal, unethical or harassing behaviors

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

- Observable patterns of behavior
- Shaped by incentives
- "Sense-making" in the organization
- Shared view of "what is" and "why is"
- Shaped by larger society
- Carried out through human interactions

ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE AND CULTURE ARE CONSTRUCTED THROUGH MICRO-SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

Classroom interactions

Email

Office hours

Advising

Formal Instruction

Hallway conversations

Meetings

Informal interactions

WHAT IS A MICROAGGRESSION?

Subtle, verbal and nonverbal slights, insults, indignities, and denigrating messages directed toward an individual due to their group identity, often automatically and unconsciously.

Usually committed by well-intentioned folks who are unaware of the hidden messages being conveyed.

Dr. Derald Wing Sue, 2010

MICRO-INEQUITIES

Apparently small events which are often ephemeral and hard-to-prove, events which are covert, often unintentional, frequently unrecognized by the perpetrator, which occur wherever people are perceived to be 'different'

Dr. Mary Rowe, 2008

IMPACTS OF
MICRO-INEQUITIES AND
MICRO-AGGRESSIONS

STUDENT RESILIENCE

Though students from communities that have been marginalized experience injury from bias, stereotyping, and microaggressions, "they do not consider themselves helpless victims"

(Yosso, et. al. 2009)

Students learn to critically navigate the realities of predominantly white institutions by drawing upon cultural knowledge and skills gained in overcoming earlier structural barriers

(Bernal, 2001, Yosso, 2005, 2006)

Research on successful scholars in STEM reveal they develop and maintain an understanding of race and gender in STEM fields.

(McGee and Martin 2011)

The same factors that help underrepresented scholars develop their ethnic identity as members of an academic community can contribute to a more diverse, positive environment for all students

(Maramba and Velazquez 2012)

First-generation college students needed to cultivate or draw on sheer identity strength (e.g., the will to endure) to cope with the challenges they faced. Whether it required tapping an existing reservoir of belief in themselves, drawing on a deep commitment to family, or cultivating such identity strength through the force of will.

(Gray, et. al. 2017)

What are the subtle verbal and nonverbal environmental cues university faculty and advisors can use to convey to students that they are welcome, visible, and capable of performing well?

MICROAFFIRMATIONS AS A COUNTER TO MICROAGGRESSIONS

Affirm feelings of student

Recognizing and validating experiences, even what seem to you to be small experiences (do you have to agree with the student's interpretation?)

Offering an empathetic facial expression and saying a student's name (preferred name and correct pronouns)

Active listening

Ask students questions that help them to reflect on and process their academic experience

These small, subtle acts contribute to a student's sense of trust and support within the academic environment in a way that nurtures self-efficacy and persistence.

Advisors who implement these practices may have an especially positive impact on students who feel intimidated by the advising process or marginalized within the university environment

(Kuh, 2012; Museus & Ravello, 2010).

When in the position of greater power or status we can and should pay attention to “small things.”

Small things are especially important with respect to feelings.

As it happens, it is relatively easy for most people to practice and teach how to affirm feelings. This is important because the “mechanics” of affirmation are not trivial in human affairs—attitudes may follow behavior just as behavior may follow attitudes.

(Rowe 2008)

INCREASING OUR AWARENESS

MODEL FOR INCREASING AWARENESS

1

Known to Us
Known to Others

Area of open
communication and
trust

Represents
unconscious bias
operating in our
brains below the
surface of
awareness

2

Known to Us
Unknown to Others

What we choose to
keep private from
others

Unknown to Us
Unknown to Others

What is not apparent
to others and not
recognized by us

4

3

Johari Window
Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham

WHAT IS FEEDBACK?

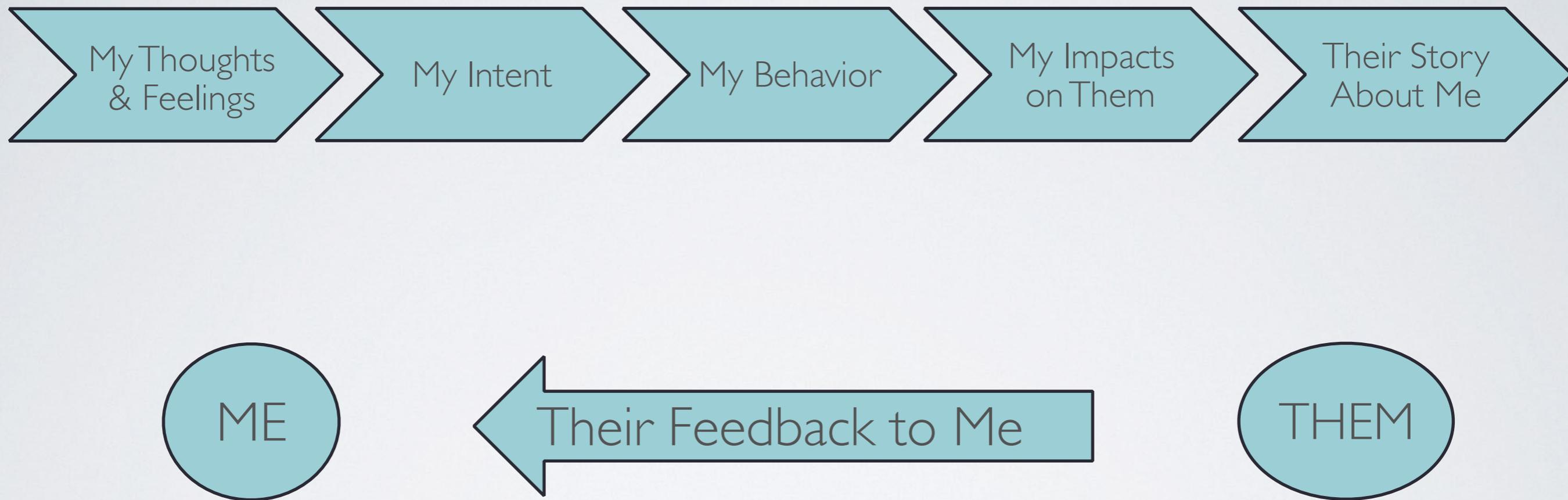
- Our feelings and emotions
- Our thoughts, automatic and controlled
- Our body reactions
- Non-verbal feedback from others
- Verbal feedback from others

WHAT IS ORGANIZATIONAL OR INSTITUTIONAL FEEDBACK?

- Campus Climate
- Recruitment and Retention
- Who is present?
- Who is absent?
- What are the lived experience for those marginalized/excluded (stories, narratives)

WHAT IS CHALLENGING ABOUT
RECEIVING FEEDBACK?

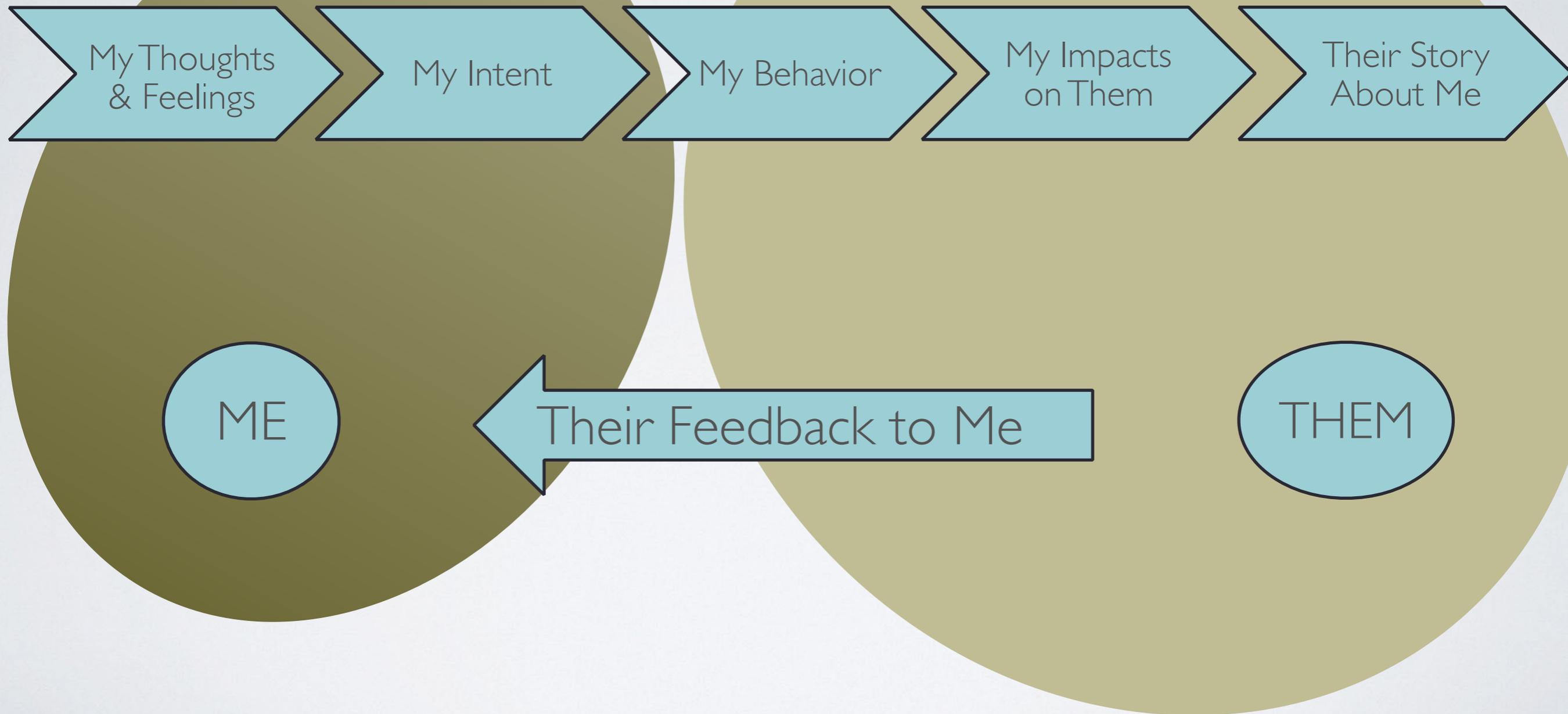
The Gap Map



Stone and Heen 2014

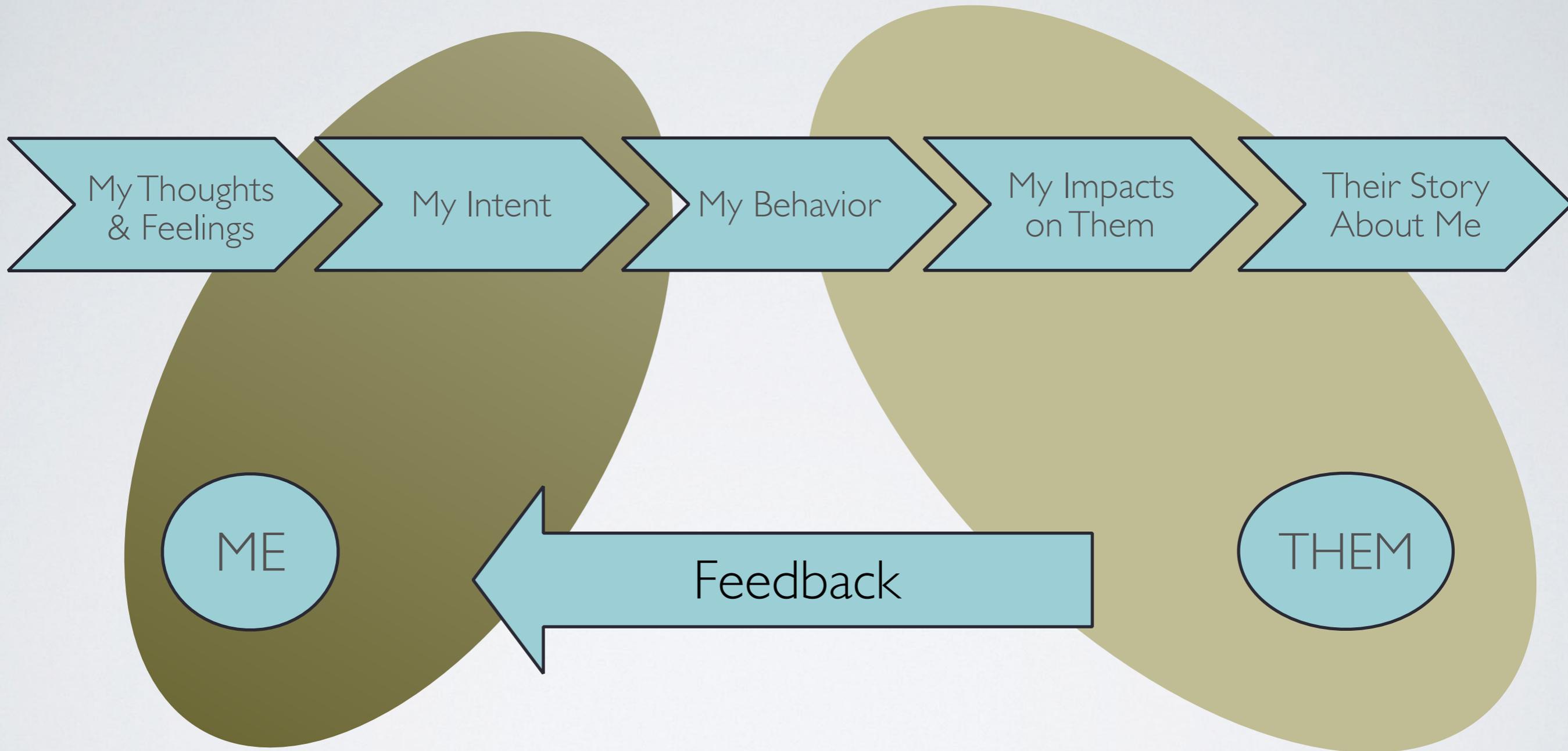
What I see and experience

What others see and experience

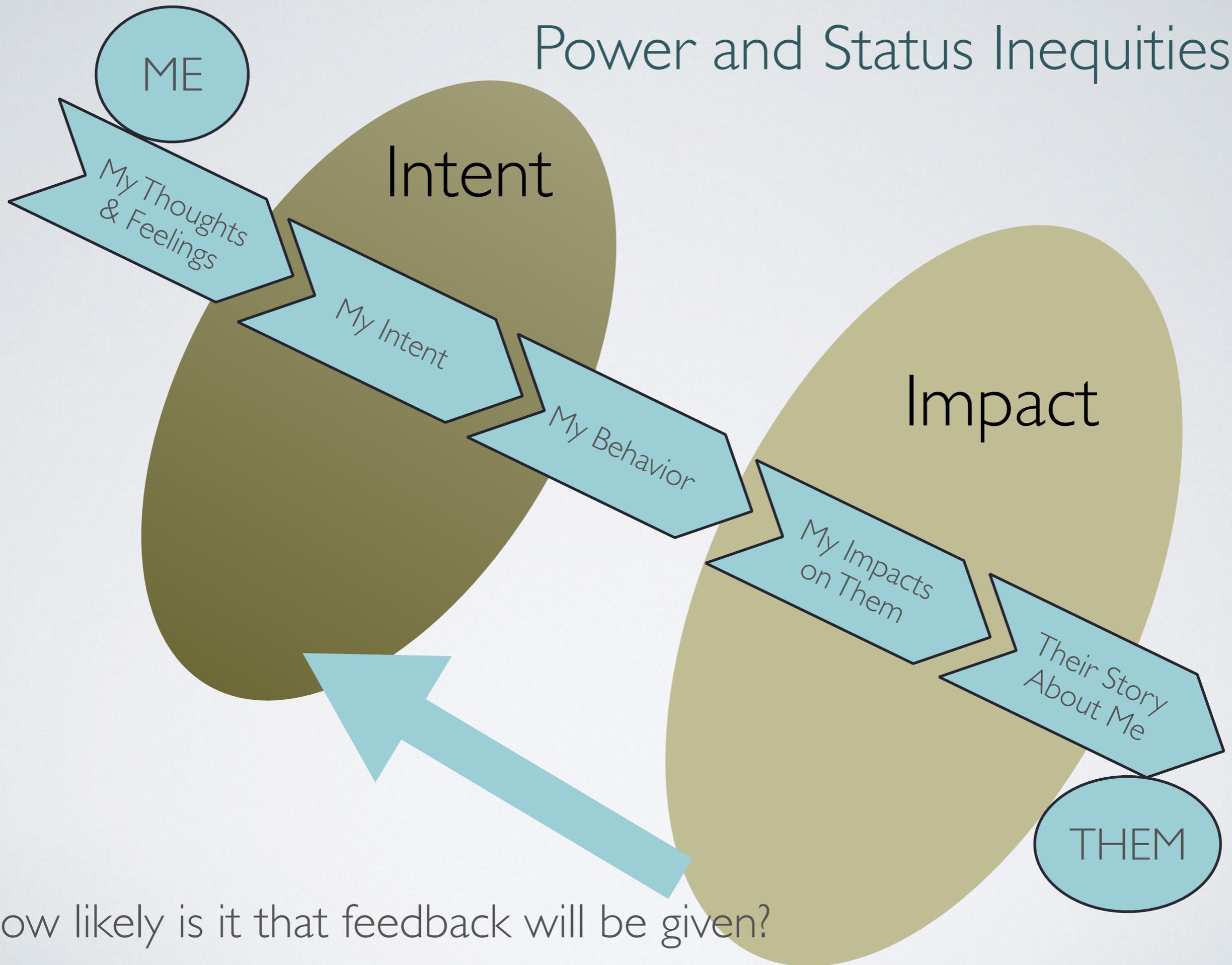


Intent

Impact



Power and Status Inequities



How likely is it that feedback will be given?

HOW DO WE GET BETTER AT RECEIVING FEEDBACK ABOUT ISSUES OF INCLUSION?

- Develop and show genuine curiosity
- Assume that unconscious bias is operating within you and your organizations
- Whatever bias you learned does not make you a bad person
- If you are receiving feedback about issues of inclusion don't dismiss or minimize

HOW DO WE GET BETTER AT RECEIVING FEEDBACK ABOUT ISSUES OF INCLUSION?

- Know that power dynamics in the relationship (title/position, social identities, status/relationships) are always there
- Look for patterns in the feedback you receive
- If you are receiving non-verbal feedback ask for verbal feedback