

# What is a Microaggression?

**Microaggressions** are varying from consciously deliberate on one end and outside one's level of awareness and unintentional. They can be reflections of world views of inclusion, exclusion, superiority, inferiority, and they can come out in ways that are outside the level of conscious awareness of an individual.

(Sue et al., 2007).

## Types of Microaggressions:

**Microassault** – Explicit, verbal, and non-verbal derogatory remarks.

**Microinsult** – Subtle remarks about a person's minoritized identities that are insensitive demeaning and rude.

**Microinvalidation** – An experience that excludes, negates, and nullifies a person's minoritized reality.



## Related Topics

**Cultural Competency** - is the ability to understand, communicate with and effectively interact with people across cultures. Cultural competence encompasses: being aware of one's own world view. developing positive attitudes toward cultural differences. It is important to note that cultural competence is never fully realized, achieved, or completed, but is rather a lifelong process.

**Cultural Humility** - is a process of 'committing to an ongoing relationship with patients, communities, and colleagues' that requires 'humility as individuals continually engage in self-reflection and self-critique.'  
(Tervalon & Murray-García, 1998)

**Implicit Bias** - refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. (kirwaninstitute.osu.edu)

# EXPLORE MORE WITH THESE RESOURCES!

<http://www.microaggressions.com/>

## Understanding and Combatting Microaggressions in post secondary Education

<https://www.higheredtoday.org/2016/07/27/understanding-and-combatting-microaggressions-in-postsecondary-education/>

## 21 Racial Microaggressions You Hear On A Daily Basis -

<https://www.buzzfeed.com/hnigatu/racial-microaggressions-you-hear-on-a-daily-basis>

## Recognizing Microaggressions and the Messages They Send -

[https://academicaffairs.ucsc.edu/events/documents/Microaggressions\\_Examples](https://academicaffairs.ucsc.edu/events/documents/Microaggressions_Examples)

## "Addressing cultural humility and implicit bias in information literacy sessions."

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<https://youtu.be/RyWxuCMMXDA>

## Citations:

Alabi, J. (2015). "This actually happened": An analysis of librarians' responses to a survey about racial microaggressions. *Journal of library administrations*, 55 179-191. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01930826.2015.1034040>

Elturk, G. (2003). Diversity and cultural competency. *Colorado Libraries*, 29(4), 5-7.

Tervalon, M. & Murray-García, J. (1998). Cultural Humility Versus Cultural Competence: A Critical Distinction in Defining Physician Training Outcomes in Multicultural Education. *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved* 9(2), 117-125. Johns Hopkins University Press. Retrieved May 16, 2018, from Project MUSE database.



# Cultural Competency in Youth Librarianship

## Types of Microaggressions

**Racial:** Assuming an Ivy League student of color was accepted as an athlete and not on academic merit. Slowing speech and pronunciation for people of color assuming they are English Second Language Imitating accents or dialects.

**Disabilities:** Using phrases like "You look so normal." Clapping after someone with special needs completes an everyday activity on their own without help like wash their hands. Commenting that someone who has mood changes is "Bipolar."

### Gender:

Concepts like "mansplaining" Calling a woman an old maid if she isn't married. Shaming a mother for breastfeeding in public.

**Myth of meritocracy** "Everyone in this society can succeed, if they work hard enough."

**Using phrases** like "That's so gay." or "I feel gyped."

**Actions without words:** Store associates following a person of color who is shopping around a store.

## Identifying Microaggressions

By definition, microaggressions are inadvertent and can range in subtlety. There is a lack of diversity in the library field which can be a form of an environmental microaggression. With this in mind, minoritized people can feel "outnumbered" though this may not be the intention of the library community (Alabi, 189).

This can lead to hyper-awareness of the different types of microaggressions mentioned before which shouldn't be confused with a person just being sensitive.

## Impact of Microaggressions

Overtime, constant exposure to microaggressions increases stress in an individual. It is draining both emotionally and psychologically and leads to feelings of self-doubt, frustration, anger and isolation (Alabi, 182)

Members of the marginalized groups may feel that they need to "...justify their own existence and activities." (Elturk, 5)

## Interrupt Microaggressions



If someone is offended by an action or remark you have made, be attentive and listen. Rather than be defensive, grow from the interaction by turning a critical eye on yourself and bias.

Include and invite groups that are traditionally underrepresented in the library community by striving for a diversity in programs and collections (Elturk, 6)



## Be an Ally!

If you remain silent when microaggressions occur, the target may believe that you agree with that viewpoint. To be an ally, be vocal and address the statements and/or behavior.

Listen to others' concerns and try your best to not be judgmental or defensive.

Support and enforce policies, practices, and procedures that allow for equal access and opportunity.

Make accountability central.

Promote cultural humility and open communication.

## Citations

Sue, D.W., Capodilupo, C.M, Torino, G.C., Bucceri, J.M., Holder, A.M.B., Nadal, K.L., and Esquilin, M. (2007). Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Implications for Clinical Practice. *American Psychologist*, 62(4), 271-286. DOI: 10.1037/0003-066X.62.4.271

Author Unknown. (2015). State of the science: implicit bias review. Retrieved from [kiwaniiinstitute.osu.edu](http://kiwaniiinstitute.osu.edu)

Murray-Garcia J., & Tervalon, J. (1998). Cultural humility versus cultural competence: a critical distinction in defining physician training outcomes in multicultural education. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/10073197>

## Talking Points: How to Interrupt and Correct Microaggressions

**Example Microaggression:** To a person of color, "Where are you from?"

**Example Interruption:** Do you mean where was I born? Or are you inquiring about my cultural background?

**Do not get immediately defensive. Respond to the speaker by restating their question which may give the speaker a chance to hear how their statement came across to you.**

**Example MA:** Giving a class tour to children with special needs, a colleague is overheard saying, "Some of those kids don't even look disabled?"

**Example Int.:** "There are many disabilities that are not visually obvious. In fact, many disabilities are called "invisible disabilities" until a child is of school age. Here are some resources for you to become more aware.

**In addition to interrupting the microaggression, educate them on the topic. Suggesting resources that will help them become more aware may prevent the incident from happening again.**

**Example MA:** Patrons are complaining about a mother who is breastfeeding in the Children's Room at the library.

**Example Int.:** Respond with information, "As of February 2018, all 50 states and the District of Columbia legally allow women to breastfeed in public."

**Inform the patron of the specifics. In this situation, a legal right of the person in the given situation. More information can mean a better understanding and raise awareness.**

**Example MA:** Imitating accents or dialects of a patron or colleague.

**Example Int.:** I do not agree with how you are mocking someone of their differences. I would like you to stop.

**Follow up with management or if necessary Human Resources.**

