

ALA OFFICE FOR DIVERSITY, LITERACY
& OUTREACH SERVICES

Identifying Microaggressions



Program Coordinator, Community Engagement

Learning Objectives

- Define microaggressions
- Discuss how microaggressions may impact librarianship
- Begin to identify ways to recognize and respond to microaggressions

Microaggressions

Microaggressions are the **brief** everyday **slights, insults, indignities,** and **denigrating messages** sent to people of color [LGBTQIA+, people with disabilities, immigrants] by **well-intentioned** [people] who are unaware of the **hidden messages** being communicated.

Dr. Derald Wing Su
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Overt & Deliberate Acts of Bigotry



HATE CRIMES



VIOLENCE



LEGISLATION THAT
CREATES BARRIERS
BASED ON SOCIAL
IDENTITIES

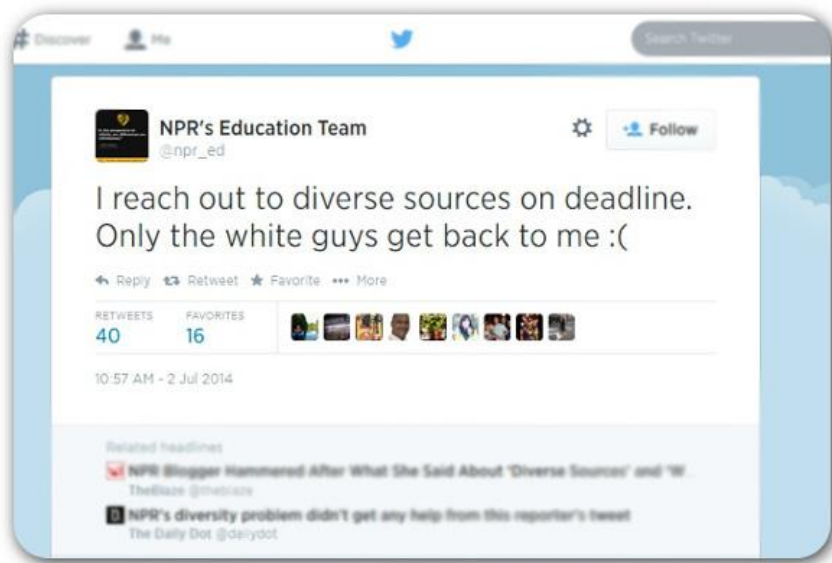


Common Characteristics of Microaggressions

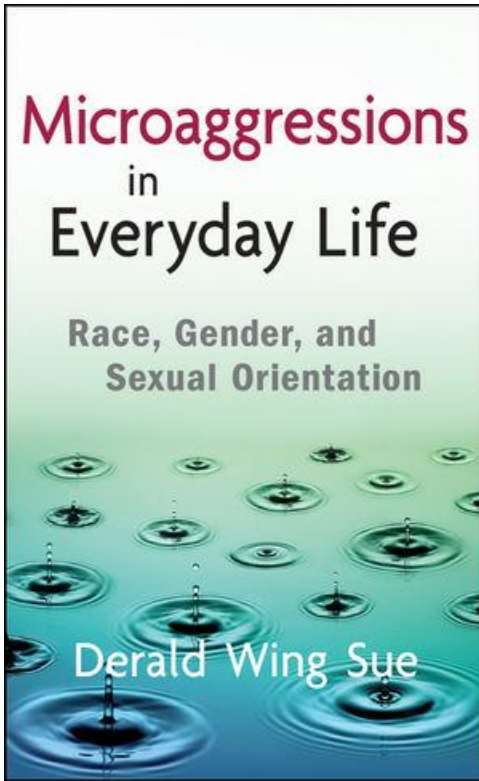
Intent/Impact

**WE JUDGE OURSELVES
ON OUR INTENT
AND
WE JUDGE OTHERS ON
THEIR IMPACT**

<http://saasysistah.com/blog/intent-vs-impact>



What is the message here?



Themes and Messages

Theme: Ascription of Intelligence

Microaggressions

- “You are a credit to your race.”
- “How did you get into that school?”

Message

- People of color are generally not as intelligent as white people.
- You do not belong in this educational institution.

Theme: Alien in Own Land

Microaggressions

- “Where are you from, originally?”
- “You speak English really well.”

Message

- You are a foreigner.
- You do not belong here.

Theme: Color Blindness

Microaggressions

- “I don’t see color.”
- “There is only one race; the human race.”
- “I treat everyone the same.”

Message

- Your identity is not relevant.
- Your experiences are not real.

Theme: Criminality

Microaggressions

- A person of color being followed around a store.
- Locking your car door when you see a group of people of color.

Message

- You are dangerous.
- You cannot be trusted.

Theme: Pathologizing Cultural Values

Microaggressions

- Asking a person of color to be “less animated” or “loud.”

Message

- You need to assimilate to the dominant culture.

Theme: Myth of Meritocracy

Microaggressions

- “My great, great grandfather was an immigrant. He worked hard and made something of himself.”

Message

- The playing field is even, so any problem encountered is because of the individual.

Environmental Microaggressions

Microaggressions

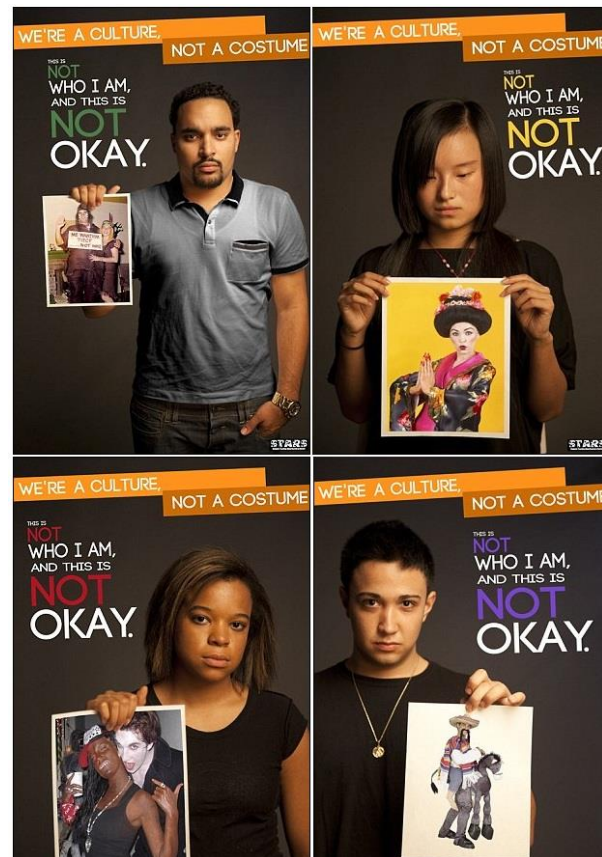
- A college or university with buildings named only after wealthy, white, heterosexual, cisgender men.
- Television shows/movies that feature predominantly white people.
- Overabundance of liquor stores and fast food restaurants in communities of color.

Message

- You don't belong. There is only so far you can go here.
- You are an outsider. You don't exist.
- People of color are lazy and deviant.



Imagery



Microaggressions in Libraries

“Racial Microaggressions in Academic Libraries: Results of Minority and Non-Minority Librarians.” Jaena Alabi, *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* 41 (1), 47-53.

Purpose of the study

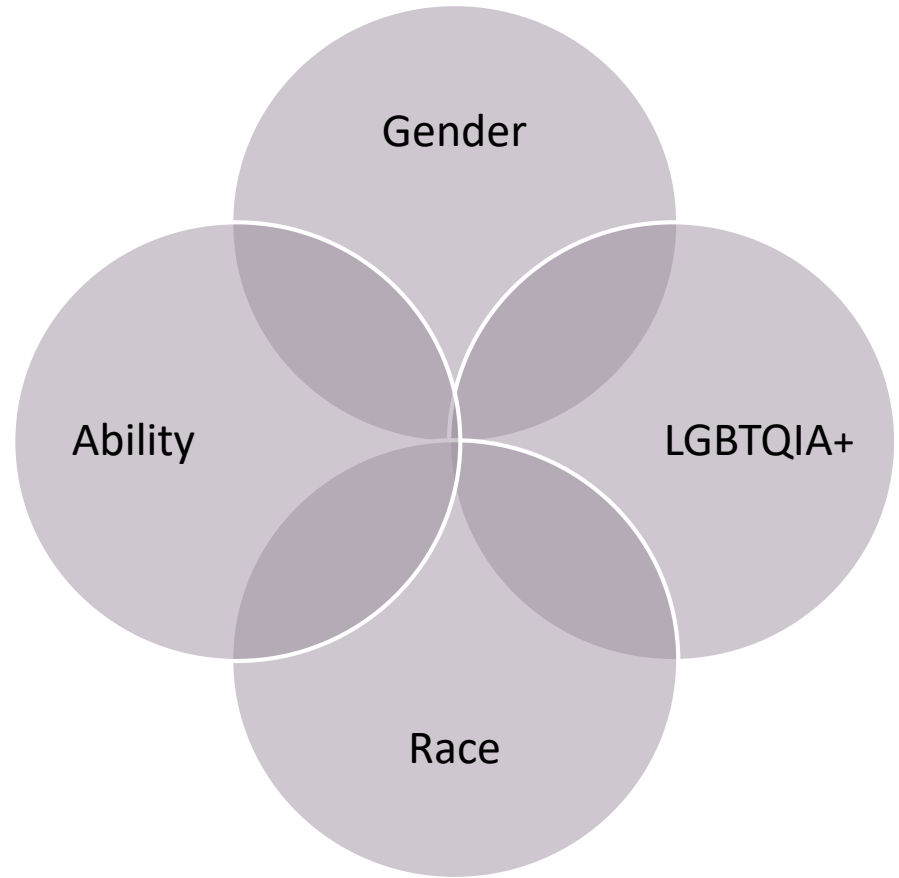
To investigate the prevalence of racial microaggressions in the academic library environment and determine whether non-minority librarians are conscious of racial microaggressions their minority colleagues are experiencing

Initial Findings

Experience/Observation Statement	Minority Responses	Non-Minority Responses
A colleague told me that I was hired because of my race.	7.3%	1%
A colleague accused me of being aggressive because of my race.	9.8%	2%
A colleague has told me that he/she was "color blind."	14.6%	1%

Intersectionality

- multiple forms of discrimination [e.g., racism, sexism, homophobia] combining or intersecting into overlapping systems of discrimination or disadvantage
- Intersectional Microaggressions: Subtle forms of discrimination based on individuals' multiple social identities



INTERSECTIONALITY

SEXISM

RACISM



Addressing Microaggressions

Impact on Individuals

“microaggressions create a hostile and invalidating climate for people of color [LGBTQIA+, people with disabilities], saps their spiritual and psychic energies, and their cumulative nature can result in depression, frustration, anger, rage, loss of self-esteem, anxiety, etc.”

Dr. Derald Wing Su

"You don't act black."

"But, you sound white!"

"Can I touch
your hair?"

"You're lucky there's
affirmative action."

"You're pretty
in an exotic way."

"You don't
dress ghetto."



sheknows

Reflections and Considerations

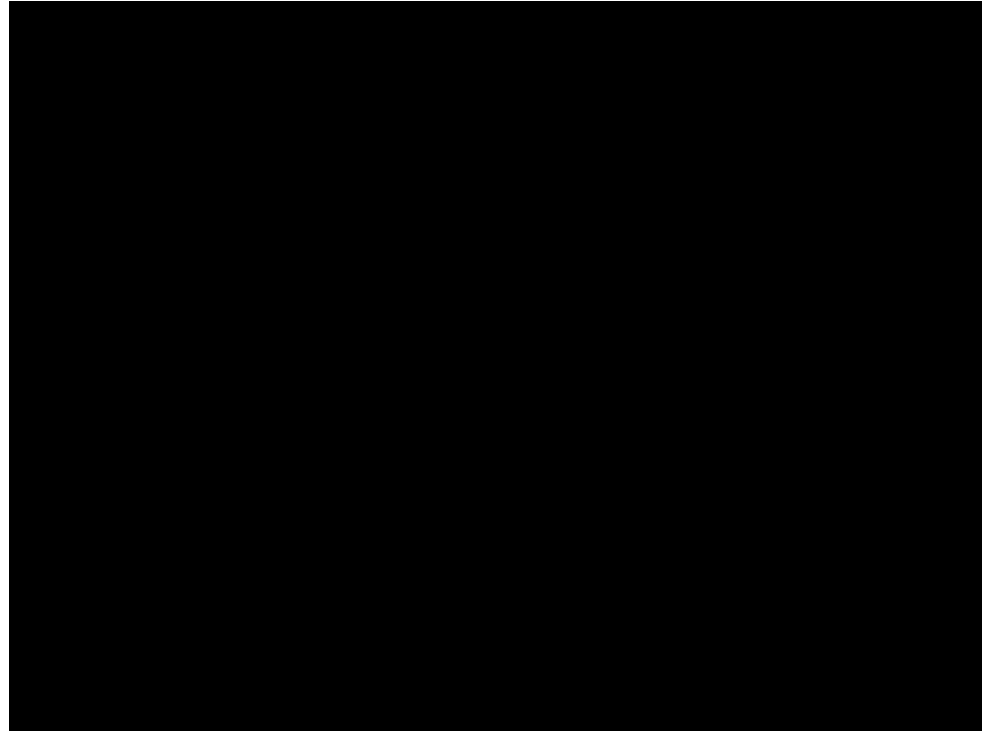
- What kind of risk will I be taking if I speak up?
- Do I have a sense of what I want to achieve when I speak up?
- Do I feel I am safe from physical or emotional abuse of any kind?

Model the Behavior

- Model the behavior you want to address.
- Keep in mind that education is the goal.
- Use your own stories to demonstrate how you've “unlearned” certain harmful, inaccurate, and misleading assumptions or information.

Focus on the
event, not the
person

“How To Tell Someone
They Sound Racist,”
from Jay Smooth



Reframe the Narrative

Microaggression

- I don't see color. I treat everyone the same.

Reframe

- People have different needs and experiences. We need to move from an equality model that treats everyone the same to an equity model that takes into account people's needs in our responses.
- It's ok to see color. It exists, and it's not all negative.

Question

How are microaggressions relevant to the work of libraries?

Question

What do you think the barriers might be to addressing microaggressions in your work?

Question

What assets or opportunities exist to address microaggressions in your work?

Resources

- “Racial Microaggressions in Academic Libraries: Results of Minority and Non-Minority Librarians.” Jaena Alabi, *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* 41 (1), 47-53.
- LISmicroaggressions: <https://lismicroaggressions.tumblr.com/>
- “What is intersectionality?”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O1isIM0ytkE>
- “The Urgency of Intersectionality” by Kimberlé Crenshaw - http://bit.ly/Urgency_Intersectionality
- “#HatchKids Discuss Microaggressions”:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=105&v=8RfwnibEd3A
- Jay Smooth’s “How To Tell Someone They Sound Racist”:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b0Ti-gkJiXc>

Thank You



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www.ala.org/diversity