Identifying Microaggressions

Jody Gray, Director
ALA Office for Diversity, Literacy and Outreach Services
Learning Objectives

- Define microaggressions
- Discuss how microaggressions may impact librarianship
- Begin to identify way to recognize and possible responses 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
Columbia University

http://itooamharvard.tumblr.com
Intersectionality

We all possess many identities. It’s possible to be discriminated against and also hold privilege.
Examples of Microaggressions in Comments

“Stop crying and acting like a girl.”

“I’m always being called by the name of my co-worker; the only other black person at work.”

“That’s so ghetto!”
Overt & Deliberate Acts of Bigotry

- HATE CRIMES
- VIOLENCE
- LEGISLATION THAT CREATES BARRIERS BASED ON SOCIAL IDENTITIES
Common Characteristics of Microaggressions

- Subtle
- Unintentional
- Ambiguous
What is the message here?

NPR's Education Team
@npr_ed

I reach out to diverse sources on deadline. Only the white guys get back to me :( 

10:57 AM - 2 Jul 2014
Microaggressions in Everyday Life

Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation

Derald Wing Sue

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

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

**Message**
- You need to assimilate to the dominant culture.
Theme: Myth of Meritocracy

Microaggression

”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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Microaggressions</th>
<th>Message</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A college or university with buildings only names after wealthy, white, heterosexual, cisgender men.</td>
<td>You don’t belong. There is only so far you can go here.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television shows/movies that feature predominantly white people.</td>
<td>You are an outsider. You don’t exist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overabundance of liquor stores &amp; fast food restaurants in communities of color.</td>
<td>People of color are lazy and deviant.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Imagery
Microaggressions in Libraries

Purpose of the study

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience/Observation Statement</th>
<th>Minority Responses</th>
<th>Non-Minority Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A colleague told me that I was hired because of my race.</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A colleague accused me of being aggressive because of my race.</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A colleague has told me that he/she was ”color blind.”</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
"I'm probably such a racist, but a black man dressed as Santa is just wrong.

Microaggressions.com & lismicroaggressions.com

I patiently waited after class to ask my professor a question. He then began making sexual comments such as that I made him aware of his age because he could never get with me because I was out of his league. I felt uncomfortable so I left, with my question unanswered. I could not believe that my college professor prioritized his inappropriate comment over my question and ultimately the quality of my education, as I am no longer comfortable going to him for questions.

"CAN YOU...

The 'joking' real friends, coworkers I tell them that used to have to me 'it's not like ye it's not like ye me feel like n

"You sound too educated to be Native..."

'So...and-so can probably speak more about *insect and Native topic/culture/object/situation/history* since they're Native... "I'm going to put on your spot."

"How much native do you have in your bloo

Student: Terrorists.
Teacher: What do they (referring to a picture of Eastern women in hijab)

Submission at the ATALM 2017 poster
"Documenting Microaggression in Art and Museums" in Santa Ana Pueblo.
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
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.
- One goal is education. It’s not about winning a point or making someone feel bad or wrong. It’s about opening a dialogue and helping someone understand something from a different perspective.
Focus on the event, not the person

How to tell someone they sound racist, from Jay Smooth

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b0Ti-gkJiXc
None of us were born with knowledge we now have about equity, diversity, and inclusion. Use your own stories to demonstrate how you’ve “unlearned” certain harmful, inaccurate, and misleading assumptions or information.
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 peoples needs in our responses.
- It is okay to see color. It exists and it’s not all negative.
Questions
ODLOS INITIATIVES

ADULT LITERACY THROUGH LIBRARIES
In partnership with ProLiteracy, ODLOS provides free resources for libraries to expand adult literacy services, including an interactive online course on the priority areas and recommendations from the 2014 Adult Literacy Through Libraries: An Action Agenda.
Visit bit.ly/Literacy_ActionAgenda

AMERICAN DREAM LITERACY INITIATIVE
In partnership with OCLC, ALA’s Public Programs Office and Dollar General Literacy Foundation offer grants to U.S. public libraries to expand services for adult English language learners or for basic education and workforce development. Learn more: ala.org/americanstream

LITERACY CLEARINGHOUSE
The ALA Literacy Clearinghouse brings together resources from across the Association that promote literacy across the lifespan. Content includes equity of access, multiple literacies, and recommended resources by populations served. Visit literacy.ala.org

SPECTRUM SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM
This program recruits and provides scholarships to students from racially underrepresented groups to assist them with obtaining a graduate degree and leadership positions within

ALA’S OFFICE FOR DIVERSITY, LITERACY AND OUTREACH SERVICES

MISSION
Using a social justice framework, the ALA Office for Diversity, Literacy and Outreach Services (ODLOS) supports library and information science workers in creating responsible and all-inclusive spaces that serve and represent the entire community by:
- Supporting library workers’ development of resources to address inequalities
- Creating a professional culture in which equity, diversity, and inclusion are part of everybody’s everyday work
Learn more: ala.org/diversity

CONTINUING EDUCATION
ODLOS offers a robust continuing education portfolio, including workshops and presentations, webinars, and consultations:
- Sample workshop:
  - Facilitating Conversations about Race
- Sample webinar:
  - Latino/O Outreach: Steps to Engaging Your Community
ODLOS provides one-time or ongoing consultations on strategic planning for equity, diversity, and inclusion.
Visit bit.ly/ODLOSContinuingEd

OUTREACH TOOLKITS
ODLOS works with member groups to create toolkits and
Thank You

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www.ala.org/diversity