Academic Librarians’ Experiences & Observations of Microaggressions
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Introduction & Background
Demographics of Professional Librarians
- 2000: 82.3% Female, 89.0% White (Diversity Counts, 2007)
- 2009-2010: 82.8% Female, 88.0% White (Diversity Counts, 2012)

Diversity in Library Literature
Emphasizes building diverse collections, serving diverse populations, and case studies of specific recruitment and/or retention programs.

Problem Statement
Despite a number of programs designed to recruit and retain minority librarians, the demographics show little gain over the past decade. What other factors might we need to consider?

Microaggressions
- Microaggressions can target any marginalized group; they can be based on race, gender, sexual orientation, class, or disability (Sue, 2010).
- “Racial microaggressions are brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group” (Sue et al., 2007, p. 273).
- Perpetrators are usually unaware that they have engaged in an exchange that demean the recipient of the communication” (Sue et al., 2007, p. 5).
- Microaggressions can be categorized as microslights, microinjuries, & microinsults (Sue et al., 2007)
- The cumulative effects of microaggressions can be detrimental (Sue, 2010).

Survey Results
Participant Demographics

Mean Responses to Survey Items

Comparison of Responses to Select Survey Items

Purpose(s)
1. Investigate the prevalence of racial microaggressions in academic libraries.
2. Determine whether non-minority librarians are conscious of racial microaggressions their minority colleagues may be experiencing.

Methodology
- Online survey targeted to academic librarians, distributed via listservs
- Based on Racial and Ethnic Microaggressions Scale (Nadal, 2011)
- 2 sets of 20 statements—experiences & observations, 7-point scale
- Responses from minority participants to experience statements compared with responses from non-minority participants to observation statements

Discussion
- Number of responses: 136 (38 minority, 98 non-minority)
- Mean scores: range from 2.0 to 3.4, which translates to a frequency between “never” and “occasionally”
- Mean responses from minority participants to experience questions are higher than mean responses from non-minority participants to observation questions for all but three items
- Comparison of responses, though not conclusive, suggests a discrepancy between minorities’ experiences and non-minorities’ observations
- Further investigation could include a larger sample and/or focus groups or interviews with both minority and non-minority librarians

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