

# **CINDERELLA AIN'T GOT NOTHING ON US: TEACHING FACULTY MICROAGGRESIONS TOWARDS LIBRARIANS**

**BY JOY DOAN & AHMED ALWAN**

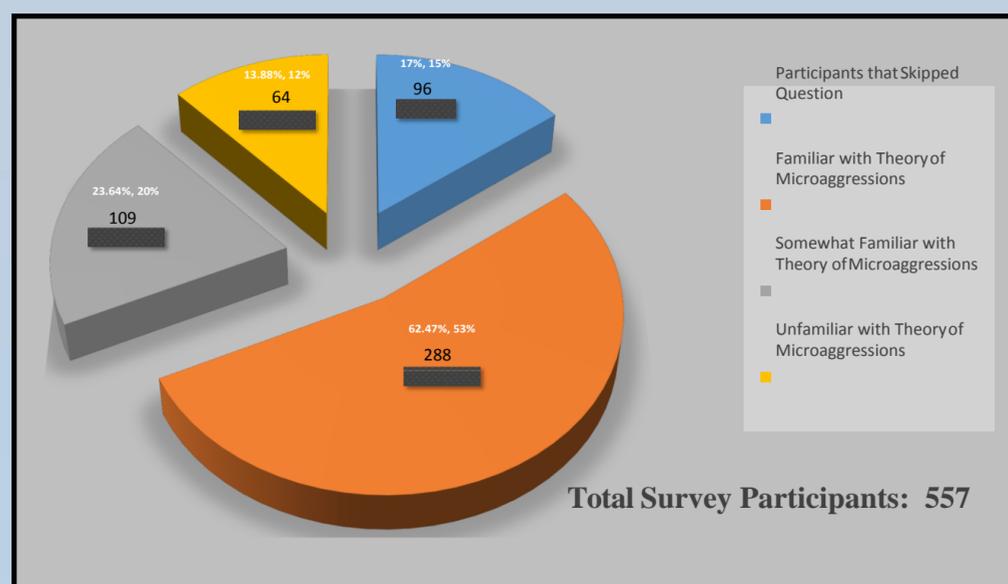
# Introduction

Microaggressions are common and casual verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, either intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon marginalized group membership (Sue, 2010). What differentiates microaggressions from overt and deliberate acts of discrimination, is that the people perpetrating microaggressions often intend no offense or are unaware they are causing harm (Sue, 2010).

Although some initial work has been done on microaggressions in academic libraries, much of this research has centered on race based microaggressions (Alabi, 2015). Little-to-no quantitative data exists on microaggressions from teaching faculty towards academic librarians based on academic status.

Many academic librarians express dissatisfaction about mistreatment or ill treatment they have endured at the hands of teaching faculty, who whether intentionally or unintentionally, treat librarians in an inferior manner, rather than as colleagues or partners.

## Familiarity with Microaggressions



## Purpose & Scope

Using the theory of microaggressions we developed a survey to investigate academic librarians' experiences of collaborations with teaching faculty, based solely on academic status.

The long-term aim of this project is to conduct an exploratory data analysis of the results of the survey, provided to academic librarians in North America.

The survey attempted to address the following three points:

1. How do librarians walk the fine line (or where to draw the line) between collegiality and assertiveness when communicating and collaborating with teaching faculty?
2. Do librarians perceive that they have the ability to speak from a place of power?
3. Do librarians feel comfortable and confident enough to report teaching faculty transgressions in the form of microaggressions to their superiors/library administration, and if they do, is adequate support received?

# Method of Study

## Survey Tool:

- The voluntary survey was designed and administered on eSurv, a web-based software tool.
- The survey included 43 closed-ended questions and 3 open-ended questions.
- Approximate completion time was estimated at 10-15minutes.

## Recruitment:

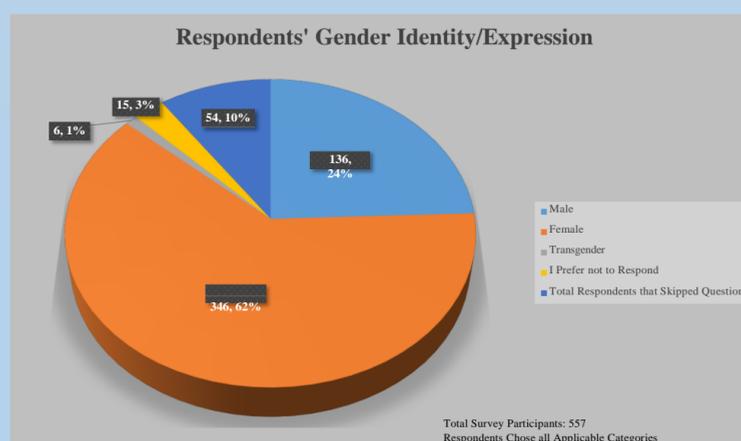
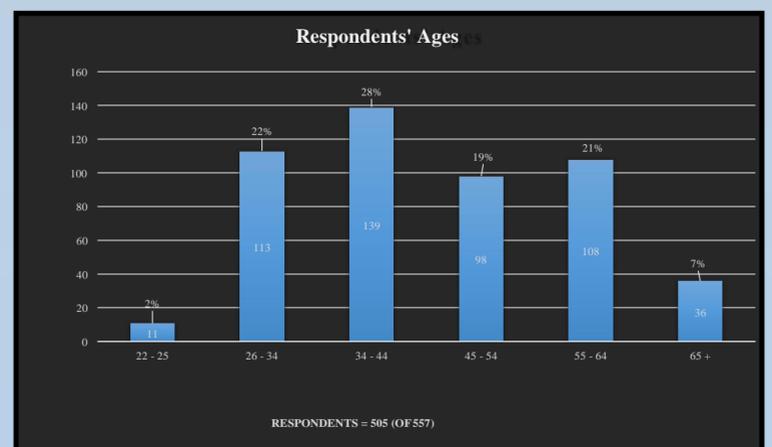
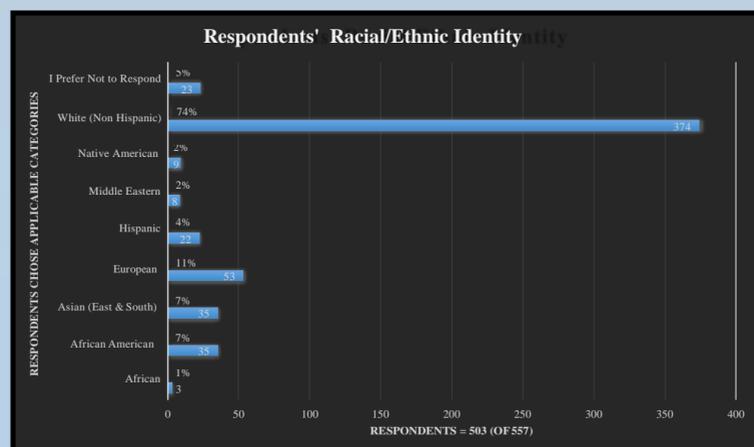
- Targeted individuals included academic librarians of any age or gender working past or present in an academic library within North America
- Subjects were recruited via multiple professional listservs operated by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) and Association of Research Libraries (ARL).

## Stakeholders:

- Direct
  - Academic librarians, teaching faculty, library administration
- Indirect
  - Students, campus partners, university/college administration

## Survey Sections:

- Personal Demographics
- Professional Demographics
- Microaggressions in a Larger Context
- Assumptions of Inferiority
- Classism
- Collaboration for IL Sessions
- Collaboration for Technical Services
- Strides Towards Effective Collaboration
- Personal Anecdotes



# Pilot Study

Principle investigators utilized a pilot study to garner feedback on the initial design of the survey. The pilot study involved a total of seven individuals, including a variety of different stakeholders – academic librarians, library staff and teaching faculty. Individuals were asked to complete the survey and provide input on the readability, grammar, removal of leading statements and survey design. Feedback was used to improve the survey prior to its public launch.

# Long Term Benefits

Overarching Goals:

1. To heighten social justice awareness for academic librarians.
2. To expand the framework of collaborations between teaching faculty and academic librarians.
3. To improve teaching faculty's understanding of librarians' role in academia.

## Future Endeavors

Phase I

- 2016 International Education Conference Venice, Italy
- June 5-9 "Microaggressions as a Barrier to Effective Collaboration between Teaching Faculty and Academic Librarians"
- Journal article in progress

Phase II

- Grant funding for SPSS
- Demographic and organization based correlations
- Larger implications of status microaggressions on LIS
- Book proposal

## Anecdotal Evidence

Three open-ended questions were asked:

1. Have you experienced a situation where you thought a teaching faculty member expressed a microaggression towards you; yet you dismissed the exchange as a misunderstanding, or 'not that important'? If yes, please elaborate.
2. Have you established a congenial working relationship with a member of the teaching faculty, or an academic department? Was this accomplished with relative ease, or only after painstaking efforts?
3. Please provide any additional anecdotal evidence or comments.

"Most of the teaching faculty I deal with are friendly, professional, and respectful of me, but, of course, I have dealt with faculty who are demanding, unreasonable, and/or abusive of my time...but I've never thought of that behavior as being a microaggression."

"I also think people just make mistakes and it's good to have thick skin instead of carrying stupid insults with us. But I am perceived as white, so I may well experience a lot less of this kind of bullshit."

"I do not believe that microaggressions are a real thing. The tone of this whole survey feels like the authors are victims. Given the economy and our educational system, we should all be grateful to have jobs. I do not expect anyone to treat me like royalty. I have never had a problem working with teaching faculty like the described scenarios. I have, however, been treated by fellow librarians as if I do not know anything because I am white."

"Yes. I'm usually regarded as little more than a way to get students information. Often, teaching faculty don't look me in the eye, ask my opinion, or think that I might have interests outside of finding books for them."

Due to the volume of responses, the principle investigators will share all qualitative data via CSUN's open access institutional repository—ScholarWorks.

### References

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- Sue, D.W. (2010). *Microaggressions and Marginality: Manifestation, Dynamics, and Impact*. Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley.
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