"Is it a journal title, or what?" Mitigating Microaggressions in Virtual Reference

The 23rd Annual Reference Research Forum
ALA Annual Conference, Chicago, IL, June 22-27, 2017

Marie L. Radford, Ph.D. | Rutgers | @MarieLRadford
Vanessa Kitzie, Ph.D. | University of South Carolina | @vkitzie
Lynn Silipigni Connaway, Ph.D. | OCLC | @LynnConnaway
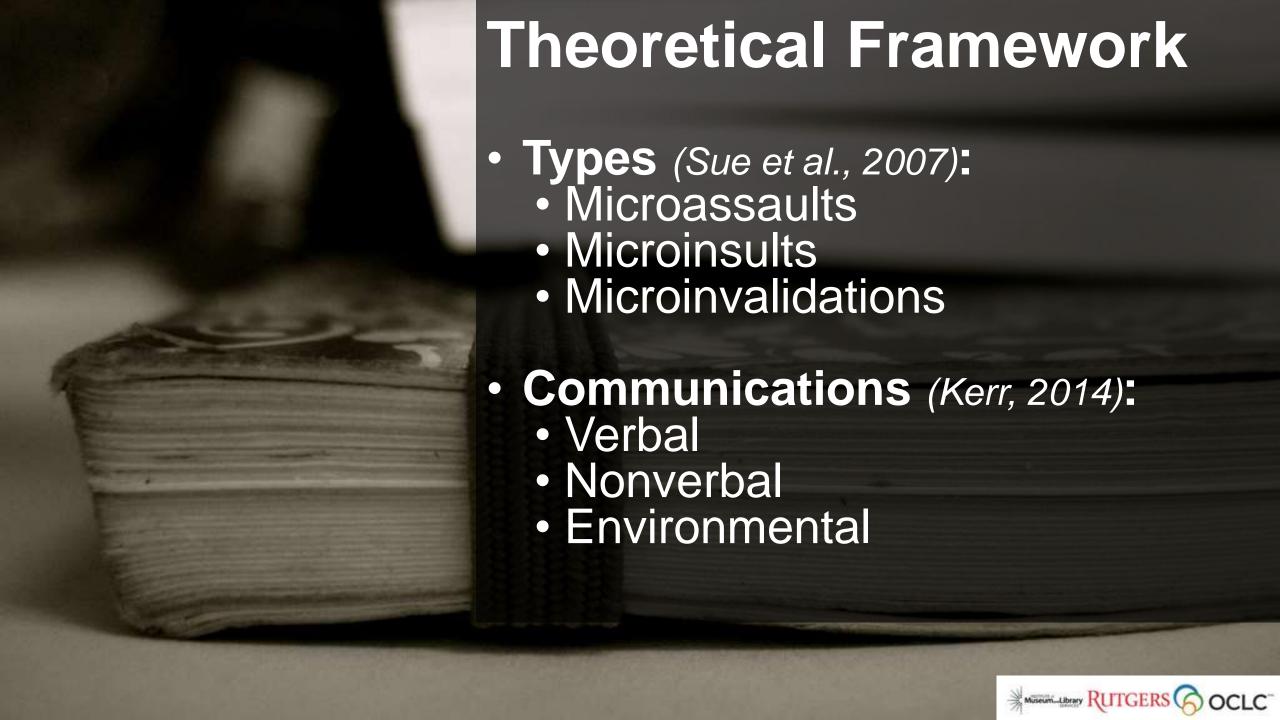**Diana Floegel, Ph.D. Student** | Rutgers | @floeginator

Genesis of Project

Based on previous research

- **Seeking Synchronicity**: Evaluating Virtual Reference Services from User, Non-User, and Librarian Perspectives *(Radford & Connaway, 2005-2008)* http://www.oclc.org/research/activities/synchronicity

- **Cyber Synergy**: Seeking Sustainability through Collaboration between Virtual Reference and Social Q&A Sites *(Radford, Connaway, & Shah, 2011-2014)* http://www.oclc.org/research/activities/synergy/default.htm

- Funded by IMLS, Rutgers University, OCLC

Defining & Identifying Microaggressions

Theoretical Framework

- **Types** *(Sue et al., 2007)*:
  - Microassaults
  - Microinsults
  - Microinvalidations

- **Communications** *(Kerr, 2014)*:
  - Verbal
  - Nonverbal
  - Environmental

Research Questions

RQ1. Do VR librarians commit microaggressions?

RQ2. What types of microaggressions do VR librarians commit?

RQ3. How can VR librarians avoid microaggressions?

Methods

- **Longitudinal data**
  - Large pool of randomly selected QuestionPoint transcripts (**2006, 2010, 2016)**
- **Emic/etic** coding
  - **Etic:** Types, Communications
  - **Emic**: Emerged in analysis
- 3 coders
  - **99%** ICR

Major Findings

- 97% of transcripts free of microaggressions!!!
  - 3% of transcripts display microaggressive behaviors

- Subtle & difficult to identify

- Coding dependent on context of full transcripts

Findings: Etic Codes

- Microaggressive behavior coded in:
  - **3%** of transcripts
  - **56% of** relational barrier transcripts
- Total = **55 of 1710 transcripts**

Code	% of Transcripts (N=55)
Verbal	95%
Microinvalidation	85%
Nonverbal	18%

**Example:
Verbal & Microinvalidation**

"Also keep in mind that California is a community property state so most property and debts acquired during marriage needs to be divided up between you and your husband" (2016).

Findings: Emic Codes

Emic Code	% of Transcripts (N=55)
Assume user's search Independence	55%
Call user out	33%
Assume user's technical literacy	27%
Assume user's information need	25%

Most often manifested as verbal, nonverbal, environmental, & microinvalidations, consistent with etic codes.

Example: Call Out User

L: Can you please be more specific about what you are looking for? Is it a journal title, or what?

U: I would like to access the American Journal of Evaluations. Their journals are published by Sage (available online withan Athens account[)]

L: Okay.

L: that is much clearer (2010)

Example:
Assume User's Search Independence

"Hi [User First Name], I have just Googled it and there is lots of information there. You shouldn't have any trouble finding it. Otherwise there are lots of books in any library which explain the conditions … Your doctor can explain it also" (2010).

Our Guidelines for Mitigating Microaggressions

- **Respond with open questions** when unsure
- **Avoid wording implying identity assumptions**
- **Suggest specific alternative resource** (not just "look elsewhere")
- **Allow time** for user reply
- **Listen** to feedback on info need & heed calls for help
- Provide **needed info w/o implying that doing so is a hassle**
- Send **generalized resources for broad questions**

Guidelines from Literature

- Present resources from various **perspectives** *(Sue, 2010; Ettarh, 2014)*
- **Avoid assumptions** of identity or ability *(Sue, 2010; Ettarh, 2014)*
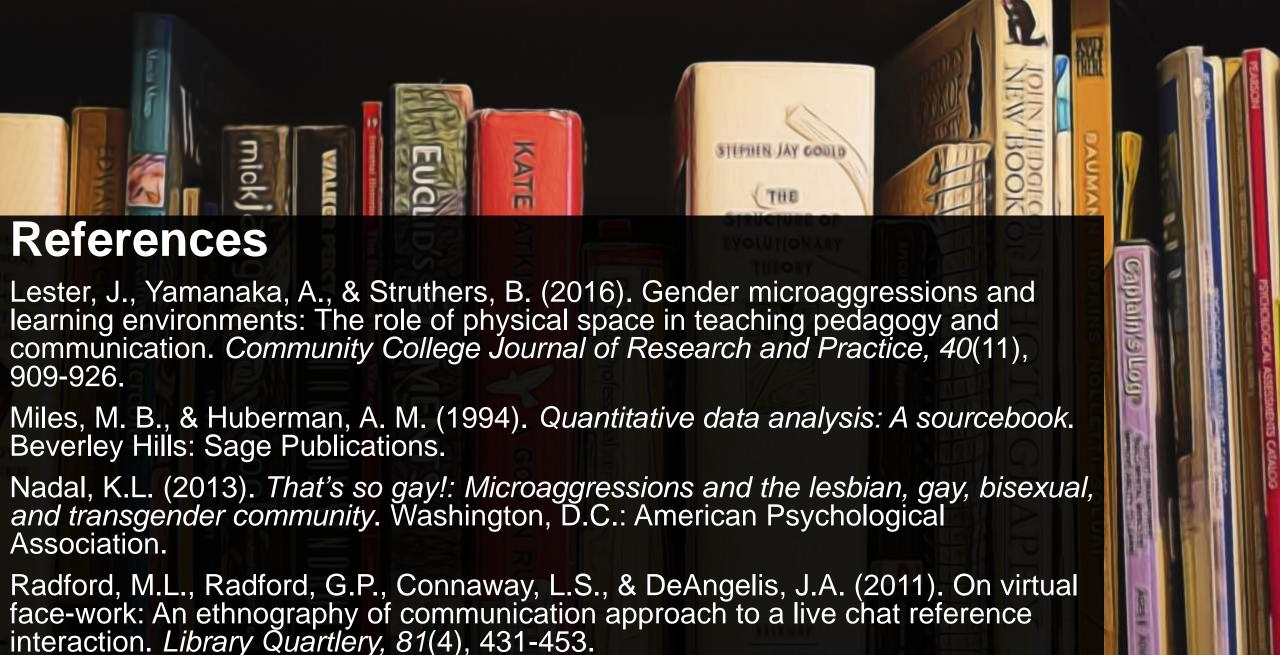- Be aware that NV invalidations **transfer to VR** *(Belluomini, 2014)*

Future Directions

Slides available at:

Conclusion

Acknowledgements

- Institute of Museum & Library Services
- QuestionPoint
- Erin Hood, OCLC
- Stephanie Mikitish, Ph.D. Rutgers

References

Belluomini, E. (2014). Microaggressions and the Internet. *New Social Worker, 21*(2), 30-31.

Ettarh, F. (2014). Making a new table: Intersectional librarianship. *In the Library With the Lead Pipe: An Open Access, Open Peer Reviewed Journal.* Retrieved from http://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2014/making-a-new-table-intersectional-librarianship-3/

Goffman, E. (1967). *Interaction ritual: Essays in face-to-face behavior.* Chicago, IL: Aldine Publishing Company

Kerr, A.G. (2014, June 19). 6 things to learn about microaggressions. *The Huffington Post.* Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/anna-giraldo-kerr/six-things-to-learn-about_b_5512057

References

Lester, J., Yamanaka, A., & Struthers, B. (2016). Gender microaggressions and learning environments: The role of physical space in teaching pedagogy and communication. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 40*(11), 909-926.

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Quantitative data analysis: A sourcebook.* Beverley Hills: Sage Publications.

Nadal, K.L. (2013). *That's so gay!: Microaggressions and the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community*. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.

Radford, M.L., Radford, G.P., Connaway, L.S., & DeAngelis, J.A. (2011). On virtual face-work: An ethnography of communication approach to a live chat reference interaction. *Library Quartlery, 81*(4), 431-453.
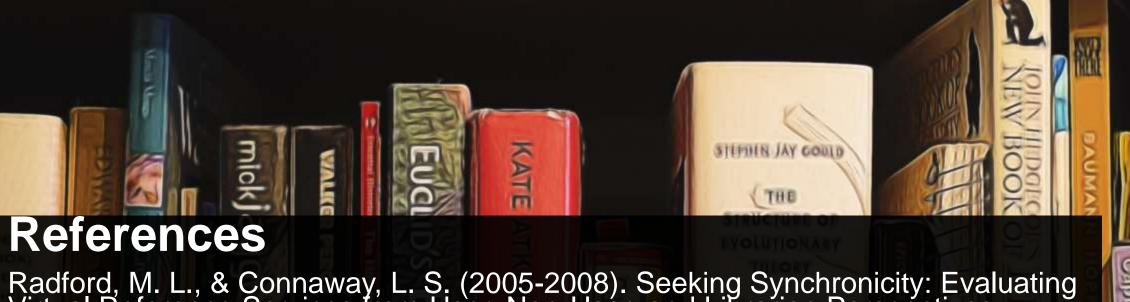
References

Radford, M. L., & Connaway, L. S. (2005-2008). Seeking Synchronicity: Evaluating Virtual Reference Services from User, Non-User, and Librarian Perspectives. http://www.oclc.org/research/activities/synchronicity

Radford, M. L., & Connaway, L. S., & Shah, C. (2011-2014). *Cyber Synergy: Seeking Sustainability through Collaboration between Virtual Reference and Social Q&A Sites*. http://www.oclc.org/research/activities/synergy/default.htm

Sue, D. W. (2010). *Microaggressions in everyday life: Race, gender, and sexual orientation*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Sue, D. W., Capodilupo, C.M., Torino, G.C., et al. (2007). Racial microaggressions in everyday life: Implications for clinical practice. *American Psychologist, 62*(4), 271-286.

Young, K., Anderson, M., & Stewart, S. (2015). Hierarchical microaggressions in higher education. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 8*(1), 61-71.

Contact Info

- Marie L. Radford, mradford@rutgers.edu
- Vanessa Kitzie, vkitzie@gmail.com
- Lynn Silipigni Connaway, connawal@oclc.org

  @LynnConnaway
- Diana Floegel, djfloegel@gmail.com