

# Reiterating Visibility: Canadian Librarians' Experiences of Racial Microaggressions via Findings from a Minority Librarians Network Redux Survey

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## Abstract

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Based on the data from the Visible Minority Librarians of Canada 2021 Redux Survey, this study examines experiences of racial microaggressions among visible minority librarians in Canada. This research fills the gap in the library and information science (LIS) literature regarding racial microaggressions in librarianship in the Canadian context. Of the 148 respondents, 69% (n=102) experienced at least one stated racial microaggression. The result of a Kruskal-Wallis H test revealed a significant association between years of experience as a librarian and a librarian's overall experiences with microaggressions. A post hoc test based on Bonferroni correction was run, which indicated that librarians with less than five years of work experience encountered microaggressions less frequently compared to those with 11-15 years of experience. For the ten stated types of racial microaggressions, the most frequently reported type was "I was told that people of all racial groups face the same barriers in employment or promotion," and the least frequently reported type was "A colleague claimed that he/she felt threatened because of my race." Fisher's exact tests were further performed to examine how the respondents differed in their experiences of each microaggression. The test results revealed that the librarians with different personal attributes (ethnicity, disability status, gender identity, language used) and employment attributes (librarian experience, management position, library type) had significantly different encounters with eight forms of microaggression. Professional library associations and libraries must strengthen education about racial microaggressions and offer support to visible minority librarians when they are confronted with microaggressive behaviours.

**Keywords:** librarian; professional networks; racial microaggressions; Visible Minority Librarians of Canada (ViMLoC)

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## Introduction

It is well established that the library is a work environment dominated by White librarians and that visible minority librarians (VML) are less represented in the workplace (Lee & Kumaran, 2014). According to the Canadian 2016 census, there was 11.0% VML compared to 22.2% representation in the general population and growing to 26.5% in the 2021 census (Statistics Canada, 2017, 2018, 2022). Understandably, with such small numbers, there was a lack of community for VML at the time, so the Visible Minority Librarians of Canada (ViMLoC) Network was formed through the Canadian Library Association at the end of 2011. Soon after forming, ViMLoC disseminated a survey to better understand who the VML were, where they were working, and to inform ViMLoC's future work. In 2015, Kumaran and Cai published their survey results, which provided more detailed information about a sample of VML that Canadian census statistics could not offer.

Intending to repeat the survey to follow the evolution of the professional demographics, in 2021, ViMLoC put out a redux of the original 2013 survey, this time in French and English. Based on the responses from 162 VML, the demographic portion of the results was published in 2022. With the redux survey, additional questions were added to gain further insight into the issues Canadian VML faces in the workplace, particularly microaggressions. While anecdotal examples in library and information science (LIS) literature convey the understanding that racial microaggressions exist in the library workplace (Alabi, 2015a; 2015b; Prieto-Gutierrez & Colmenero-Ruiz, 2023; Wheeler, 2016), the types of microaggressions and their frequency have not often been described, especially in the Canadian context. This quantitative analysis better quantifies racial microaggression experiences and the corresponding associations with the respondents' demographics. This research seeks to answer the following questions:

- 1) Overall, how do VML experience microaggressions? What factors are associated with these experiences?
- 2) Specifically, how do VML experience ten different forms of microaggression? What factors are associated with these experiences?

## Literature Review

Many types of discrimination are discussed in recent Library and Information Science literature, and microaggressions are one of them (Alabi, 2015a; Arroyo-Ramirez et al., 2018; Ishaq & Hussain, 2022). Microaggressions are often intricately connected to racism, subtle, difficult to quantify, and affect employee morale and library culture (Kendrick & Damasco, 2019; Sue, Capodilupo, et al., 2007b).

While the literature review's primary focus is on microaggressions and their presence in libraries, the topic also peripherally touches on the tenets of critical race theory and whiteness studies. One of the tenets of critical race theory is that racism is endemic; thus, it is essential to hear the counterstories of Canadian VML, as done in this study, to present their perspectives and experiences (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). The examination of academic libraries using critical race theory by Nataraj et al. (2020) argued that Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) library workers were often silenced by bureaucratic structures that adopted socially progressive values to falsely give the appearance that library workers were invested in a shared purpose. In particular, the study found that BIPOC library workers' recommendations, feedback, and

concerns were met with feigned interest, only for senior (predominantly white) management to enact something entirely different, thereby maintaining the institution's hegemonic power structures (Nataraj et al., 2020). Critical white studies (CWS) highlights the visible and invisible presence of whiteness as a social norm and the invisible and unspoken privileges associated with whiteness. A quantitative study on microaggressions concretizes the "hazy academic ideal that race is socially constructed" (Nayak, 2007, p. 752). Whiteness studies help reveal that subtle and nuanced microaggressions exist and perpetuate white supremacy and privilege. Counterstories from VML would be relevant testimonies that center on the presence of microaggressions not only in librarianship but also academia, in which academic libraries are embedded.

### Definition of Microaggressions

Microaggressions are "brief, everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to people of colour because they belong to a racial minority group" (Sue, Capodilupo, et al., 2007b, p. 273). The term "microaggressions" was first coined by Chester M. Pierce, an African American psychiatrist, who defined microaggressions as "subtle, stunning, and often automatic, and nonverbal exchanges which are 'put downs'" (Pierce et al., 1977, p. 66). More recently, Jana and Baran (2020) have proposed "subtle acts of exclusion" (SAE) as another term to illustrate microaggressions. Jana and Baran (2020) argue that SAE destigmatized microaggressions and helped to understand how microaggressions caused severe harm to people regarding job satisfaction and mental and physical health.

### Measures of Racial Microaggressions

Research conducted on measuring racial microaggressions through scales and categories has helped to better understand and contextualize microaggressions. Sue, Capodilupo, et al. (2007b) created a taxonomy of racial microaggressions in everyday life. They claimed that microaggressions appeared in three forms: microassault, microinsult, and microinvalidation. Microassaults are explicit racial derogations delivered verbally or nonverbally meant to hurt people of colour through name-calling, avoidant behavior, or purposeful discriminatory actions. Microinsults convey rudeness and insensitivity and demean a person's racial heritage or identity. Microinvalidations "exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of a person of color" (Sue, Capodilupo, et al., 2007b, p. 274). Sue, Capodilupo, et al. (2007b) also identified nine themes of microaggressions: alien in one's own land, ascription of intelligence, color blindness, criminality/assumption of criminal status, denial of individual racism, myth of meritocracy, pathologizing cultural values/communication styles, second-class status, and environmental invalidation.

Exploring how Black college students' experiences correspond to or differ from the microaggression types originally proposed by Sue, Capodilupo, et al. (2007b), Williams et al. (2020) identified 15 categories of racial microaggressions, broadly consistent with the original taxonomy. However, they expanded Sue, Capodilupo, et al.'s work in several notable ways. For instance, Williams et al. (2020) split Sue, Capodilupo, et al.'s "alien in one's own land" into two categories, "not a true citizen" and "racial categorization & sameness". Their category called "pathologizing minority culture or appearance" extended Sue, Capodilupo, et al.'s category called "pathologizing cultural values/communication styles," by adding judgements about appearance. Williams et al. also added new categories such as "connecting via stereotypes" and "exoticization and eroticization". Also, based on the original taxonomy of racial microaggressions presented by Sue, Capodilupo et al. (2007b), Nadal (2011) introduced the Racial and Ethnic

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Microaggression Scale (REMS), which evaluates the types of racial microaggressions that individuals experience in their everyday lives. Six major components were identified: assumptions of inferiority, second-class citizen and assumptions of criminality, microinvalidations, exoticization/assumptions of similarity, environmental microaggressions, and workplace and school microaggressions (Nadal, 2011). Torres-Harding et al. (2012) developed the Racial Microaggressions Scale (RMAS) as a multidimensional tool to assess perceptions of racial microaggressions by racialized individuals.

### **Microaggressions Associated with Gender, Ethnicity, Position of Power, and Disability**

Gender-based studies have found plenty of evidence regarding sex discrimination in the general labour market (Berger, 2021; Carr, 1983; Jain, 1982). Sex orientation and gender identity microaggressions also exist in the workplace (Rivera et al., 2012; Warner et al., 2023; Yang & Carroll, 2018). Trans-related employment discrimination cases have increased (Christensen, 2008; Mallory & Sears, 2015).

The intersectionality of gender and race is an often-cited aspect of microaggressive acts in the workplace (Salter et al., 2021). Coined by the legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, “intersectionality” describes how race, class, gender, and other individual characteristics intersect and overlap (Crenshaw, 2017). For instance, many studies address the experiences of microaggression among Asian women (Le et al., 2020), Black women (Donovan et al., 2013; Moody & Lewis, 2019), and Black men (Pitcan et al., 2018). In their study of the experiences of microaggressions toward Asian Americans, Sue, Bucceri, et al. (2007a) identified eight major microaggressive themes directed toward Asians in the United States. The findings from Torres-Harding et al. (2012) revealed that males and African Americans were more frequently stereotyped as being aggressive or criminal, Latinos and Asian Americans reported more occurrences of being viewed as “foreigners,” and women reported being sexualized more often than men.

Microaggressions could be explored as expressions of power and privilege. Sweeney and Cooke’s (2018) findings revealed multiple and conflicting understandings of microaggressions, along with significant gaps in knowledge regarding how microaggressions related to larger systems of power and privilege in libraries. However, microaggressions were more often discussed as individual instances of personal offense (Sweeney & Cooke, 2018).

While substantial studies have been conducted on the effects of microaggressions in the public sphere, there is not as much research examining microaggressions in the workplace, particularly within the organizational hierarchy. Young et al. (2015) explored the “hierarchical microaggressions” that affected individuals of different employee groups at universities. They discerned four hierarchical microaggressions: valuing/devaluing based on role/credential, changing accepted behavior based on role, actions (ignoring/excluding/surprise/interrupting) related to role, and terminology related to the work position. Their research findings indicated that the roles people held at universities were associated with their experiences with microaggressions in their day-to-day workplace interactions (Young et al., 2015).

Similarly, there are few studies of disability microaggression. Keller and Galgay’s (2010) article is one of the few studies that explores different types of microaggressions. They found ten specific themes: denial of personal identity, denial of disability experience, denial of privacy,

helplessness, secondary gain, spread effect, infantilization, patronization, second-class citizen, and desexualization (Keller & Galgay, 2010). Furthermore, Snyder et al. (2010) and Villanueva-Flores et al. (2014; 2017) found that employees with disabilities reported higher rates of discrimination and harassment due to their disability status.

Regarding disability status, Oud's (2018) survey of Canadian academic librarians revealed that librarians with disabilities felt that their workplace was less accepting of diversity than non-disabled respondents. Sixty-one percent of the respondents sometimes, often, or always experienced at least one microaggression (Oud, 2018). The existence of microaggressions such as "someone avoids me because of my disability" and "someone minimizes my disability" (Oud, 2018, p.14) was similar to Alabi's (2015a) findings of microaggressions, although Oud's study did not focus on racial minorities. In addition, research on microaggressions by gender in libraries is limited. Despite the predominance of women in the library world, women in top administrative positions continue to encounter obstacles and barriers to equality (Bladek, 2019).

### Racial Microaggressions in Academic Libraries

While there is an emerging body of library-related research about racial microaggressions in libraries, such research has focused almost exclusively on academic libraries in the United States (Alabi, 2015a; 2015b; Prieto-Gutierrez & Ruiz, 2023; Wheeler, 2016). There have been few studies done in the Canadian context.

#### *The United States*

One of the first studies done on microaggressions in academic libraries, conducted by Alabi (2015a), examined how academic librarians of colour experienced racial microaggressions from their library colleagues and how White academic librarians observed microaggressive exchanges directed at their minority colleagues. Alabi (2015b) concurrently studied the experiences of members of the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) and identified seven themes of microaggressions, including microassaults, microinsults, microinvalidations, environmental microaggressions, uncertainty or racism not observed, being excluded or isolated, and implications for recruitment and retention. The racialized identities of academic librarians experiencing microaggressions in Swanson et al. (2018) revealed the complex, nuanced, and varied lived experiences of academic librarians of colour and explored what it meant to be a person of colour working in a predominantly White profession and in predominantly White institutions. Prieto-Gutiérrez and Colmenero-Ruiz's (2023) study analyzed the incidence of various types of microaggressions in academic libraries from the viewpoint of academics and researchers. Their study revealed that academic libraries were less aggressive spaces and, therefore, safer from microaggressions, partly due to the vocational nature of library work in higher education (Prieto-Gutiérrez & Colmenero-Ruiz, 2023). Aside from the physical space, Prieto-Gutiérrez and Colmenero-Ruiz found that academic librarians of colour experienced microaggressions more often than university faculty of colour. In fact, among the academic staff surveyed, of the 56% of participants who identified as White, 15% indicated that they "do not deny ignoring the librarian because of his or her race" (Prieto-Gutiérrez & Colmenero-Ruiz, 2023, p. 5).

Studies on experiences of microaggressions among Black librarians are noteworthy. Dalton et al. (2018) reported stories of microaggressions based on actual events and interactions through a fictitious character to avoid identifying their colleagues and students. While their intention was

not to humiliate or condemn, their piece offered a glimpse into participants' unique challenges. Dalton et al.'s research provoked a change in the profession's culture by Black librarians in academia. Adding to Black librarians' challenges, Epps (2008) explored the experiences of Black women library leaders and found that many dealt with discrimination and additional barriers in the profession due to their race. The respondents described instances of microaggressions, such as lack of respect, inclusion, and courtesy, without explicitly stating they were microaggressions (Epps, 2008). The literature has described many of these experiences of racial microaggressions, subtly or explicitly, but the theme is that they are common occurrences for VML.

Academic librarians of colour can internalize their negative interactions within their work environments (Swanson et al., 2018), but there is less research on the downstream effects of microaggressions. One of the microaggression themes identified by Alabi (2015b) is regarding recruitment and retention, which needs to be better understood in relation to the impact of microaggressions. For example, in a study of low morale amongst American academic VML, racial microaggressions were the second-most low-morale experience, negatively affecting the ability to recruit and retain a diverse workforce (Kendrick & Damasco, 2019). Furthermore, in Johnson's (2016) thesis, their thematic analysis after interviewing nine minority librarians found that eight respondents identified instances of microaggressions, and six explicitly identified microaggressions as barriers to working in academic libraries. Due to negative stereotypes and preconceived notions of their abilities, some academic librarians of colour must perform, demonstrate, and convince patrons and colleagues of their place in the profession (Swanson et al., 2018). African-American women leaders in academic research libraries were found to have to work twice as hard as their White counterparts to be considered equal and to receive recognition (Epps, 2008). This echoed a statement by Boyd et al. (2017) by an academic library diversity resident who said,

As a visible minority, I've also experienced microaggressions that made me feel like I didn't belong in the profession. I definitely felt like I had to work four times as hard and do it twice as cheery because of my race and my residency status. (p. 495)

To address these experiences, Alabi (2018) continued her line of research on microaggressions and identified steps that White academic librarians could take to prevent and address racial microaggressions in order to become better allies to their colleagues of colour.

### **Canada**

Alwan et al. (2018) looked into the "status-based microaggressions" that academic librarians faced when working with faculty and their effect on collaboration in information literacy. Based on a survey of U.S. and Canadian academic librarians, their study revealed that librarians experienced more frequent instances of status-based microaggressions due to their self-identified minority status (Alwan et al., 2018). Winn's (2022) article, "Why Are You Brown? Racial Microaggressions in Canadian Academic Libraries," is a personal narrative of one academic librarian's experience as a Black librarian in Canada. This study revealed disturbing anecdotes of microaggressions she experienced in Canadian academic libraries and the decision to leave Canada. The lack of Canadian literature on racial microaggressions reveals a need to explore this further.

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## Data and Methodology

This study's quantitative analyses are based on data from the ViMLoC 2021 Redux Survey. The Employment Equity Act defines visible minorities as "persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour" (Government of Canada, 2021, p. 2). The Canadian visible minority population consists mainly of the following groups: South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Latin American, Arab, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Korean, and Japanese (Statistics Canada, 2021). Respondents to the ViMLoC 2021 Redux Survey submitted 101 comments through the open-ended text box on the survey, detailing their encounters with racial microaggressions. With consent from the respondents, direct quotes were used throughout the findings, with some edited for length into excerpts.

### The ViMLoC 2021 Redux Survey

The questions from the first ViMLoC 2013 survey (Kumaran & Cai, 2015) were updated for the ViMLoC 2021 Redux Survey to reflect changes made to the professional language. An additional 24 new questions were also included, with the researchers referring to other studies to inform the new questions (Alabi, 2015a; Canadian Association of Professional Academic Librarians, 2019; DeLong et al., 2015; Kandiuk, 2014). Using Qualtrics XM, the English language survey was circulated in January and February 2021, with a French translation of the survey made available in March 2021. The survey invitations were distributed through the Canada Library associations' electronic mail lists, and ViMLoC's website, and social networking platforms. Only respondents who identified as currently employed visible minority librarians were permitted to complete the survey. There were ultimately 162 respondents; 138 librarians completed the English survey, and 24 librarians completed the French survey.

The ViMLoC 2021 Redux Survey consisted of six questions about demography, ten about education, and 20 about employment, including two about racial microaggressions (see Appendix A). In the survey, based on Sue, Capodilupo et al. (2007b), "racial microaggressions" were defined as "subtle hostile, derogatory, or negative slights and insults (verbal, nonverbal, and/or visual) directed toward people of colour, whether intentional or unintentional". Respondents were asked to rate how frequently they experienced ten forms of racial microaggressions throughout their careers.

Unlike Alabi's (2015a) survey, which was based on a six-point scale (never, rarely, occasionally, often, regularly, and frequently), the ViMLoC 2021 Redux Survey used a five-point Likert scale: 1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, and 5 = Always. Cronbach's alpha coefficient helps determine whether a set of survey items consistently measures the same characteristic. The scale reliability showed high internal consistency, with a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.904.

### Data Analysis

To examine librarians' overall experiences of racial microaggressions, researchers calculated composite scores for each respondent by summing up the scores for ten individual items. As 14 librarians did not provide answers to all questions, their composite scores were not calculated. Thus, 148 librarians were included in the analysis of composite scores with a possible range from 10 to 50, with higher scores indicating experiencing microaggressions more frequently. Researchers examined if librarians' microaggression composite scores would significantly differ

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concerning six personal attributes (ethnicity, generation, age, gender identity, disability status, and language were chosen to complete the survey) and five employment attributes (librarian experience, library type, full-time/part-time position, permanent/temporary employment, and management position).

As the sample size was relatively small and the microaggression composite scores for comparison groups did not have normal distributions verified with the Shapiro-Wilk goodness of fit test, this violated the assumption of the parametric ANOVA F-test. Instead, the Kruskal-Wallis H test was conducted, which is the nonparametric equivalent of ANOVA and is used for testing whether samples originate from the same distribution. The Kruskal-Wallis test does not make assumptions about normality and uses the ranks of the data rather than the raw data (Ostertagová et al., 2014). When the Kruskal-Wallis test identifies significant results, it suggests that at least one of the samples differs from the others. However, the test does not identify where or how many differences occur. Hence, for the variables having three or more groups, a post hoc test for making pair-wise comparisons is needed (Ostertagová et al., 2014). In this study, Dunn's test was performed to determine which groups differed, with Bonferroni adjustment to control the familywise error rate (Dinno, 2015).

To examine which form of racial microaggression was experienced more often, the mean scores for individual items were compared. To explore the factors that might be associated with librarians' experience in each form of microaggression, Fisher's exact tests were conducted rather than chi-square tests because the expected counts were less than five in 20% or more of the cells in the contingency tables (Kim, 2017). The Freeman-Halton Extension of Fisher's exact test was employed for more than two rows by two-column contingency tables (Ibraheem & Devine, 2013). STATA 13 was used to perform all data analyses.



## Measures

Researchers used ten items in the racial microaggressions scale. Nine items were adapted from Alabi (2015a, p. 50), and one item was created by the authors (“A colleague assumed that I would have a lower English proficiency because of my race.”). These items aligned with five themes described by Nadal (2011).

*Table 1. Themes and Items Included in the Racial Microaggressions Scale*

|   |
|---|
| Theme 1: Assumption of Inferiority  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A colleague assumed that I would have a lower English proficiency because of my race.</li> <li>• A colleague showed surprise at my professional success.</li> <li>• I was told that I was hired because of my race.</li> </ul>   |
| Theme 2: Assumption of Criminality  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A colleague claimed that he/she felt threatened because of my race.</li> </ul>   |
| Theme 3: Microinvalidations   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I was told that people should not think about race anymore.</li> <li>• I was told that people of colour do not experience racism anymore.</li> <li>• I was told that I was overly sensitive about issues of race.</li> <li>• I was told that people of all racial groups face the same barriers in employment or promotion.</li> </ul> |
| Theme 4: Assumption of Similarity   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I was told that all people in my racial group are all the same.</li> </ul>   |
| Theme 5: Workplace and School Microaggressions  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My opinion was ignored in a group discussion because of my race.</li> </ul>  |

1) Assumption of Inferiority: three items - “A colleague assumed that I would have a lower English proficiency because of my race”, “A colleague showed surprise at my professional success”, and “I was told that I was hired because of my race.” 2) Assumption of Criminality: one item - “A colleague claimed that he/she felt threatened because of my race.” 3) Microinvalidations: four items - “I was told that people should not think about race anymore”, “I was told that people of colour do not experience racism anymore”, “I was told that I was overly sensitive about issues of race”, and “I was told that people of all racial groups face the same barriers in employment or promotion.” 4) Assumption of similarity: one item - “I was told that all people in my racial

group are all the same.” 5) Workplace and School microaggressions: one item - “My opinion was ignored in a group discussion because of my race.”

For the variables having more than three categories and small numbers, it was necessary to pool categories to achieve adequate counts and increase the power of Fisher’s exact test to detect a significant difference (McDonald, 2014). Specifically, researchers pooled categories for the following variables:

- 1) Each form of microaggression: Response categories collapsed from five to three. “Never” and “Rarely” were pooled to indicate a low degree of frequency, “Sometimes” indicated a moderate degree of frequency, and “Often” and “Always” were pooled to indicate a high degree of frequency.
- 2) Ethnicity: Respondents from Arab, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, West Asian, Southeast Asian, and Latin American ethnic groups were combined into “other visible minorities.” Those who identified as “multiple visible minorities” and “White and visible minorities” were grouped as “multiracial.” Hence, respondents were divided into five ethnic groups: Black, Chinese, South Asian, other visible minorities, and multiracial.
- 3) Age: Nine age groups were collapsed into three age groups: 35 and under, 36-55, and 56 and over.
- 4) Gender identity: Four librarians selected “prefer not to answer,” and two librarians selected “other,” but without elaboration on the details; the responses for these two categories were combined. No one selected “transgender” or “two-spirit;” therefore, gender identity consisted of three groups: male, female, and “prefer not to answer or other.”
- 5) Library type: “Regional Library” was combined with “Public Library,” and “College Library” was merged into “Academic Library.” No respondents worked at school libraries; therefore, library type was categorized into four groups: “Academic Library,” “Public Library,” “Special Library,” and “Other.”

## Results

### Demographics

Table 2 presents the demographic information of VML in the survey. Chinese was the largest single ethnic group, followed by South Asian and Black. Other ethnic minorities and multiracial groups accounted for nearly one-half. Respondents were predominantly female (81%, n=130). More than half were aged 36-55, and 8% (n=12) indicated having a disability. Eighty-five percent (n=138) filled out the English survey compared to 15% (n=24) who completed the French survey. Regarding employment characteristics, the number and percentage of respondents decreased as their experience as a librarian grew. Those having less than five years of experience accounted for 35% (n=56), and librarians with more than 20 years of experience made up 15% (n=23). Nearly half (48%, n=78) of the respondents worked at academic libraries and one-third (34%, n=55) in public libraries. Most worked full-time (90%, n=143) and in permanent positions (87%, n=140). Regarding management positions, 69% (n=110) were in non-management positions. Supervisors

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and middle managers accounted for 13% (n=21) each, and senior administrators comprised only 5% (n=8).



Table 2. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

| Variable                        | Categories                    | Number | Percentage |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------|------------|
| <b>Personal Characteristics</b> |                               |        |            |
| Ethnicity                       | Chinese                       | 38     | 24%        |
|                                 | South Asian                   | 24     | 15%        |
|                                 | Black                         | 19     | 12%        |
|                                 | Other Visible Minorities      | 43     | 27%        |
|                                 | Multiracial                   | 35     | 22%        |
| Generation                      | First Generation              | 88     | 56%        |
|                                 | Second Generation             | 63     | 40%        |
|                                 | Other                         | 6      | 4%         |
| Age                             | 35 and under                  | 56     | 34%        |
|                                 | 36-55                         | 89     | 56%        |
|                                 | 55 and over                   | 16     | 10%        |
| Gender Identity                 | Female                        | 130    | 81%        |
|                                 | Male                          | 25     | 15%        |
|                                 | Prefer not to answer or other | 6      | 4%         |
| Disability Status               | No                            | 147    | 92%        |
|                                 | Yes                           | 12     | 8%         |
| Language Used                   | English                       | 138    | 85%        |
|                                 | French                        | 24     | 15%        |

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| Employment Characteristics         |                       |     |     |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----|-----|
| Librarian Experience<br>(in Years) | 0-5                   | 56  | 35% |
|                                    | 6-10                  | 41  | 25% |
|                                    | 11-15                 | 21  | 13% |
|                                    | 16-20                 | 20  | 12% |
|                                    | 21-25                 | 14  | 9%  |
|                                    | 25 and over           | 9   | 6%  |
| Library Type                       | Academic              | 78  | 48% |
|                                    | Public                | 55  | 34% |
|                                    | Special               | 20  | 13% |
|                                    | Other                 | 8   | 5%  |
| Full-Time Position                 | No                    | 16  | 10% |
|                                    | Yes                   | 143 | 90% |
| Permanent Position                 | No                    | 21  | 13% |
|                                    | Yes                   | 140 | 87% |
| Management Position                | Non-management        | 110 | 69% |
|                                    | Supervisor            | 21  | 13% |
|                                    | Middle Management     | 21  | 13% |
|                                    | Senior Administration | 8   | 5%  |

*Note.* As the number of librarians responding to each question varied, the total number might not always add up to 162.

### Overall Experiences of Racial Microaggressions

Librarians generally reported moderately frequent encounters with the ten stated forms of microaggression. The microaggression composite scores ranged from 10 to 40, with a median score of 18. The average composite score was 19.01 (SD = 7.76). Table 3 presents the numbers and percentages of librarians who experienced various numbers of microaggression

with different frequencies. Of the 148 respondents, 31% (n=46) never or rarely encountered microaggressions, meaning conversely that 69% (n=102) experienced at least one stated microaggression. In particular, four librarians experienced all ten types, sometimes, often, or always. Meanwhile, 64% (n=94) indicated they did not encounter any of these microaggressions either often or always. These librarians might still have had such experiences but with a lower frequency (rarely or sometimes). In other words, 36% (n=54) often or always ran into at least one microaggression. Eight percent (n=11) often or always encountered at least five types, including one librarian having often or always experienced all types. Ten percent (n=16) experienced five or more microaggressions sometimes.

Table 3. Occurrence of Racial Microaggressions

| Total Number of Microaggressions Experienced | Librarians Who Experienced Microaggressions (n=148) |            |           |            |                 |            |
|--|---|------------|-----------|------------|-----------------|------------|
|  | Never or Rarely                                     |            | Sometimes |            | Often or Always |            |
|  | Number  | Percentage | Number    | Percentage | Number          | Percentage |
| 0  | 4   | 3%         | 50        | 34%        | 94              | 64%        |
| 1  | 4   | 3%         | 24        | 16%        | 21              | 14%        |
| 2  | 6   | 4%         | 29        | 20%        | 9               | 6%         |
| 3  | 8   | 5%         | 16        | 11%        | 6               | 4%         |
| 4  | 9   | 6%         | 13        | 9%         | 7               | 5%         |
| 5  | 11  | 7%         | 11        | 7%         | 8               | 5%         |
| 6  | 9   | 6%         | 2         | 1%         | 1               | 1%         |
| 7  | 14  | 9%         | 2         | 1%         | 0               | 0%         |
| 8  | 17  | 11%        | 1         | 1%         | 0               | 0%         |
| 9  | 20  | 14%        | 0         | 0%         | 1               | 1%         |
| 10   | 46  | 31%        | 0         | 0%         | 1               | 1%         |

### Factors Associated with Overall Experiences of Racial Microaggressions

Kruskal-Wallis H tests were conducted to analyze the associations of six personal attributes and five employment attributes with librarians' overall experiences of microaggressions. The test results did not identify significant personal factors but revealed three significant employment factors: full-time, permanent, and librarian experience.

Specifically, full-time librarians experienced microaggressions significantly more often than part-time librarians,  $H(1) = 4.04$ ,  $p = .045$ . Meanwhile, librarians in permanent positions experienced microaggressions significantly more often than librarians in temporary positions,  $H(1) = 3.88$ ,  $p = .049$ . It should be noted that the  $P$  values in the above two cases were minimally below 0.05, which is the traditional cutoff used to indicate significance. Further studies are needed to corroborate these findings with a larger dataset.

The Kruskal-Wallis  $H$  test also revealed a significant association between years of experience as a librarian and overall experiences of microaggressions,  $H(5) = 13.85$ ,  $p = .017$ . A post hoc test based on Bonferroni correction was run to identify where the differences were. The test result confirmed that experiences of microaggressions were significantly different between the group having less than five years of experience and the group having 11-15 years of experience ( $p = .008$ ). This result suggested that early-career librarians encountered racial microaggressions less frequently compared to mid-career librarians.

### Experiences of Each Form of Racial Microaggression

In the survey, respondents rated how frequently they had experienced ten forms of racial microaggression. The mean scores for each microaggression for all respondents are presented in Table 4 from the highest to the lowest mean. On a five-point scale, the mean scores ranged from 1.39 to 2.27, with a higher score indicating experiencing a microaggressive act more often. Table 3 also contains the number and percentage of respondents who indicated often or always experiencing each microaggression. The most frequently reported microaggressions were:

- I was told that people of all racial groups face the same barriers in employment or promotion (17%, 27 respondents).
- I was told that all people in my racial group are the same (15%, 24 respondents).
- A colleague assumed that I would have a lower English proficiency because of my race (13%, 20 respondents).
- I was told that I was overly sensitive about issues of race (12%, 19 respondents).

The least frequently reported microaggressions were:

- I was told that people of colour do not experience racism anymore (8%, 13 respondents).
- I was told that people should not think about race anymore (7%, 11 respondents).
- I was told that I was hired because of my race (6%, 10 respondents).
- A colleague claimed that he/she felt threatened because of my race (4%, six respondents).

Table 4. Occurrence of 10 Forms of Racial Microaggressions

| Forms of Microaggression   | All Respondents |            | Indicating “Often” or “Always” |            |
|--|-----------------|------------|--------------------------------|------------|
|  | Number          | Mean Score | Number                         | Percentage |
| I was told that people of all racial groups face the same barriers in employment or promotion. | 158             | 2.27       | 27                             | 17%        |
| I was told that all people in my racial group are the same.                                    | 155             | 2.10       | 24                             | 15%        |
| A colleague assumed that I would have a lower English proficiency because of my race.          | 158             | 2.07       | 20                             | 13%        |
| I was told that I was overly sensitive about issues of race.                                   | 154             | 2.03       | 19                             | 12%        |
| My opinion was ignored in a group discussion because of my race.                               | 155             | 2.02       | 15                             | 10%        |
| A colleague showed surprise at my professional success because of my race.                     | 158             | 1.97       | 16                             | 10%        |
| I was told that people of colour do not experience racism anymore.                             | 155             | 1.93       | 13                             | 8%         |
| I was told that people should not think about race anymore.                                    | 157             | 1.90       | 11                             | 7%         |
| I was told that I was hired because of my race.  | 157             | 1.52       | 10                             | 6%         |
| A colleague claimed that he/she felt threatened because of my race.                            | 155             | 1.39       | 6                              | 4%         |

Alabi (2015a) provided mean scores for 41 academic minority librarians who experienced the same nine microaggressions. For comparison, the researchers calculated the mean scores for the 78 academic VML in the ViMLoC 2021 Redux Survey. As the Likert scales used in the two studies were different, it was inappropriate to compare the mean scores for each microaggression directly. Instead, their mean scores were ranked separately from one to nine (see Table 5). Comparing their ranks could help us understand the different experiences of microaggressions among academic minority librarians in the two studies. Compared with the results of Alabi (2015a), academic VML in the ViMLoC 2021 Redux Survey experienced this microaggression more



often: “I was told that all people in my racial group are all the same.” Conversely, they experienced two microaggressions less often: “I was told that people of colour do not experience racism anymore.” and “I was told that people should not think about race anymore.” Comparatively, librarians in the two studies were very similar in ranking the other six microaggressions.

Table 5. Occurrence of Racial Microaggressions among Academic Minority Librarians

| Forms of Microaggression   | ViMLoC 2021 Redux Survey |      | Alabi (2015a) |      |
|--|--------------------------|------|---------------|------|
|  | Mean Score               | Rank | Mean Score    | Rank |
| I was told that people of all racial groups face the same barriers in employment or promotion. | 2.28                     | 1    | 2.05          | 1    |
| I was told that I was overly sensitive about issues of race.                                   | 2.08                     | 2    | 1.95          | 3    |
| I was told that all people in my racial group are all the same.                                | 2.07                     | 3    | 1.33          | 9    |
| My opinion was ignored in a group discussion because of my race.                               | 2.03                     | 4    | 1.84          | 5    |
| I was told that people of colour do not experience racism anymore.                             | 2.01                     | 5    | 2.00          | 2    |
| I was told that people should not think about race anymore.                                    | 1.96                     | 6    | 1.95          | 3    |
| A colleague showed surprise at my professional success because of my race.                     | 1.92                     | 7    | 1.76          | 6    |
| I was told that I was hired because of my race.  | 1.57                     | 8    | 1.65          | 8    |
| A colleague claimed that he/she felt threatened because of my race.                            | 1.39                     | 9    | 1.66          | 7    |

### Factors Associated with Each Form of Racial Microaggressions

Fisher’s exact tests were performed to examine the associations of the librarians’ six personal attributes and five employment attributes with their experiences of each microaggression. None of the attributes were found to be significantly related to experiences of two microaggressions:

“I was told that I was overly sensitive about issues of race.” and “A colleague assumed that I would have a lower English proficiency because of my race.” For the remaining eight microaggressions, seven attributes were identified as significant factors. Results are summarized in Table 6, including *p* values from Fisher’s exact tests. The associated factors for each microaggression are explained in detail in the following section.

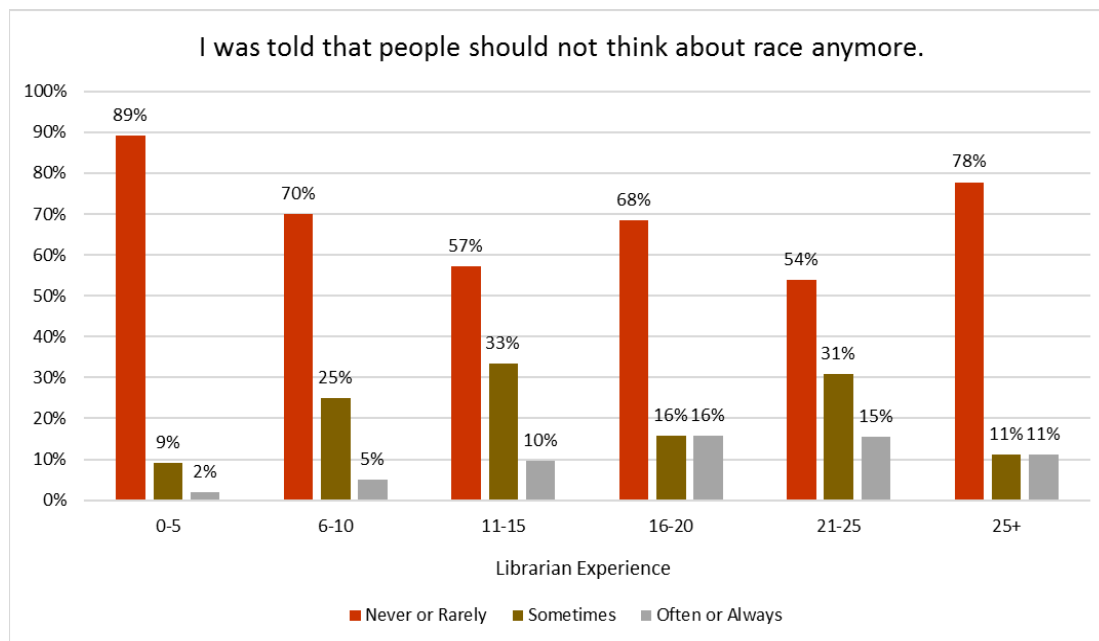
**Table 6.** Significant Factors Associated with Different Forms of Racial Microaggressions

| Forms of Microaggression  | Significant Factors  | <i>p</i> -value | n   |
|---|----------------------|-----------------|-----|
| 1) I was told that people should not think about race anymore.                                    | Librarian experience | .026            | 157 |
|   | Management position  | .004            | 156 |
| 2) I was told that people of all racial groups face the same barriers in employment or promotion. | Gender identity      | .027            | 158 |
|   | Management position  | .001            | 157 |
| 3) I was told that people of colour do not experience racism anymore.                             | Librarian experience | .022            | 156 |
| 4) I was told that all people in my racial group are all the same.                                | Librarian experience | .009            | 155 |
| 5) My opinion was ignored in a group discussion because of my race.                               | Library type         | .023            | 155 |
|   | Librarian experience | .005            | 155 |
| 6) A colleague claimed that he/she felt threatened because of my race.                            | Disability status    | .026            | 153 |
|   | Librarian experience | .032            | 155 |
| 7) A colleague showed surprise at my professional success because of my race.                     | Ethnicity            | .041            | 156 |
| 8) I was told that I was hired because of my race.  | Language used        | .044            | 157 |

**Microaggression #1: I was told that people should not think about race anymore.**

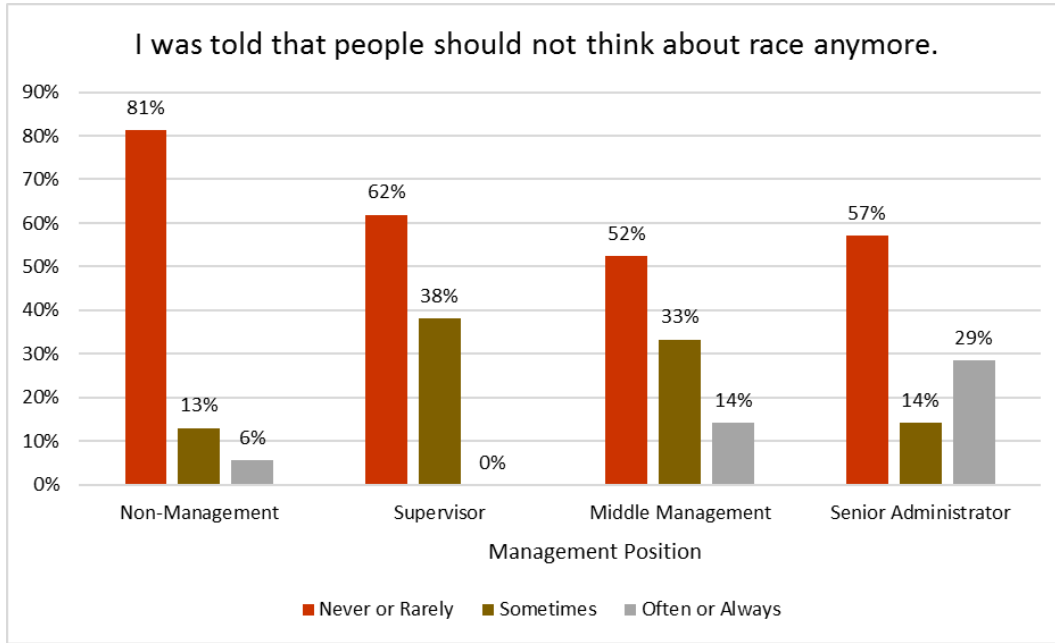
Librarians' experiences were found to be significantly associated with their encounter with this microaggression ( $p = .026$ ). Specifically, librarians with less than five years of experience differed significantly from the other four groups: 6-10 years ( $p = .049$ ), 11-15 years ( $p = .005$ ), 16-20 years ( $p = .043$ ), and 21-25 years ( $p = .013$ ). In Figure 1, 89% ( $n=49$ ) of the respondents having less than five years of experience never or rarely ran into this microaggression, which is higher than the proportions of any other groups. On the other hand, this group had the lowest rate (2%,  $n=1$ ) of often or always experiencing it.

Figure 1. Experience of Microaggression #1 by Librarian Experience



Management position also affected the frequency of experiencing this microaggression ( $p = .004$ ). Mainly, librarians in non-management positions differed significantly from supervisors ( $p = .028$ ) and middle managers ( $p = .015$ ). As shown in Figure 2, 81% ( $n=87$ ) of the respondents in non-management positions never or rarely encountered this microaggression, compared to 62% ( $n=13$ ) of the supervisors and 52% ( $n=11$ ) of the middle managers. Meanwhile, no supervisors often or always confronted this challenge, compared to 6% ( $n=6$ ) of those in non-management positions and 14% ( $n=3$ ) of the middle managers.

Figure 2. Experience of Microaggression #1 by Management Position

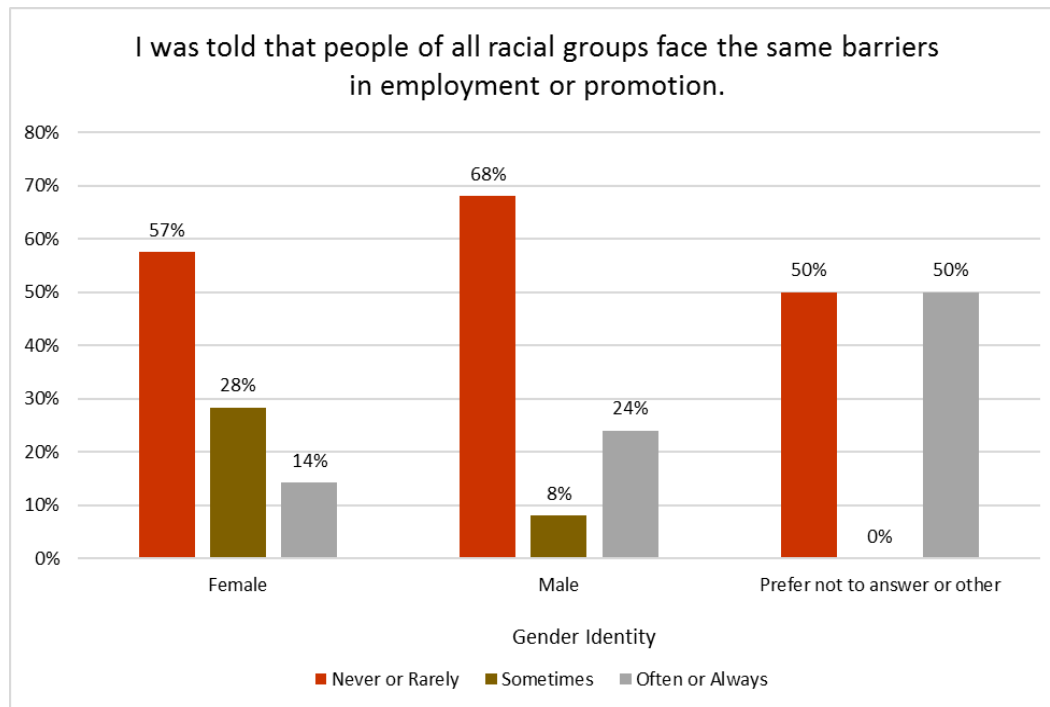


**Microaggression #2: I was told that people of all racial groups face the same barriers in employment or promotion.**

Gender identity was found to be significantly related to experiences of this microaggression ( $p = .027$ ). A significant difference existed between females and those who preferred not to disclose their gender identity or who indicated they had another gender identity not listed in the survey ( $p = .037$ ). As shown in Figure 3, 57% ( $n=73$ ) of females reported that they never or rarely encountered this microaggression compared to 68% ( $n=17$ ) of males and half ( $n=3$ ) of those who selected “prefer not to answer” or “other.” Females (28%,  $n=36$ ) were 3.5 times more likely to experience this than males (8%,  $n=2$ ) on an occasional basis. Twenty-four percent ( $n=6$ ) of males versus 14% ( $n=18$ ) of females often or always faced this issue, compared to half ( $n=3$ ) of the respondents who selected “prefer not to answer” or “other.”

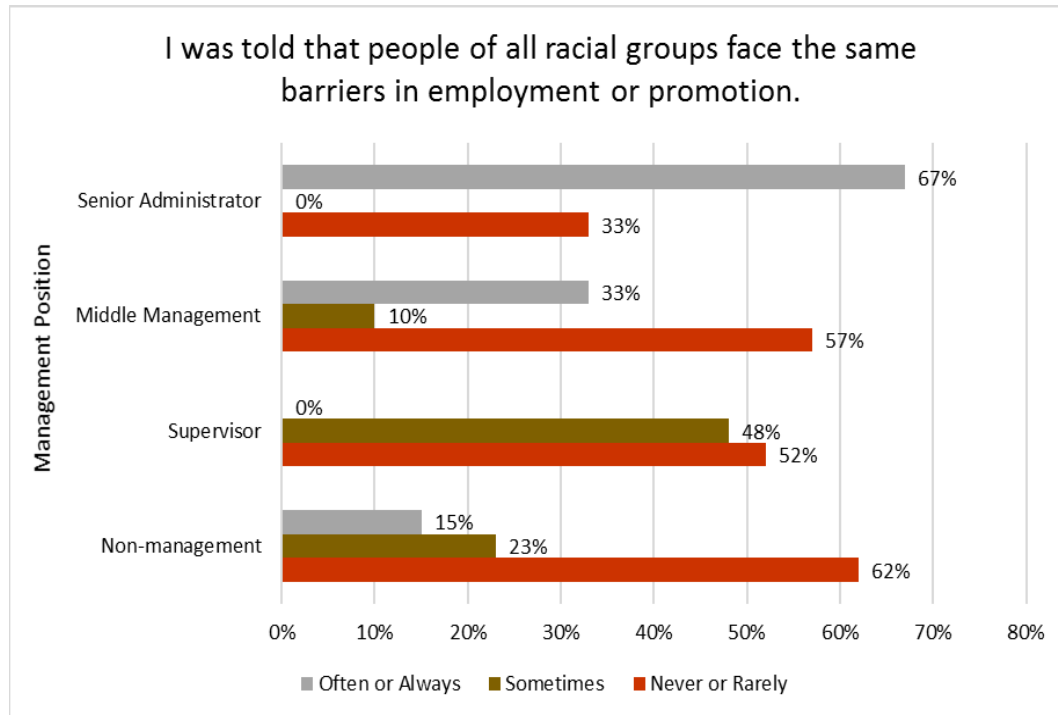


Figure 3. Experience of Microaggression #2 by Gender Identity



Management position was also significantly associated with librarians' experiences with the second microaggression ( $p = .001$ ). Librarians in non-management positions significantly differed from supervisors ( $p = .027$ ) and senior administrators ( $p = .012$ ). Supervisors were significantly different in their experience from middle managers ( $p = .001$ ) and senior administrators ( $p = .000$ ). In Figure 4, 62% ( $n=68$ ) of the librarians in non-management positions versus 52% ( $n=11$ ) of the supervisors and 33% ( $n=2$ ) of the senior administrators never or rarely experienced it. Senior administrators most likely often or always encountered this microaggression compared to supervisors and middle managers. These results seemed to suggest that with a higher level of management position, librarians were more inclined to disagree with the statement, "People of all racial groups face the same barriers in employment or promotion."

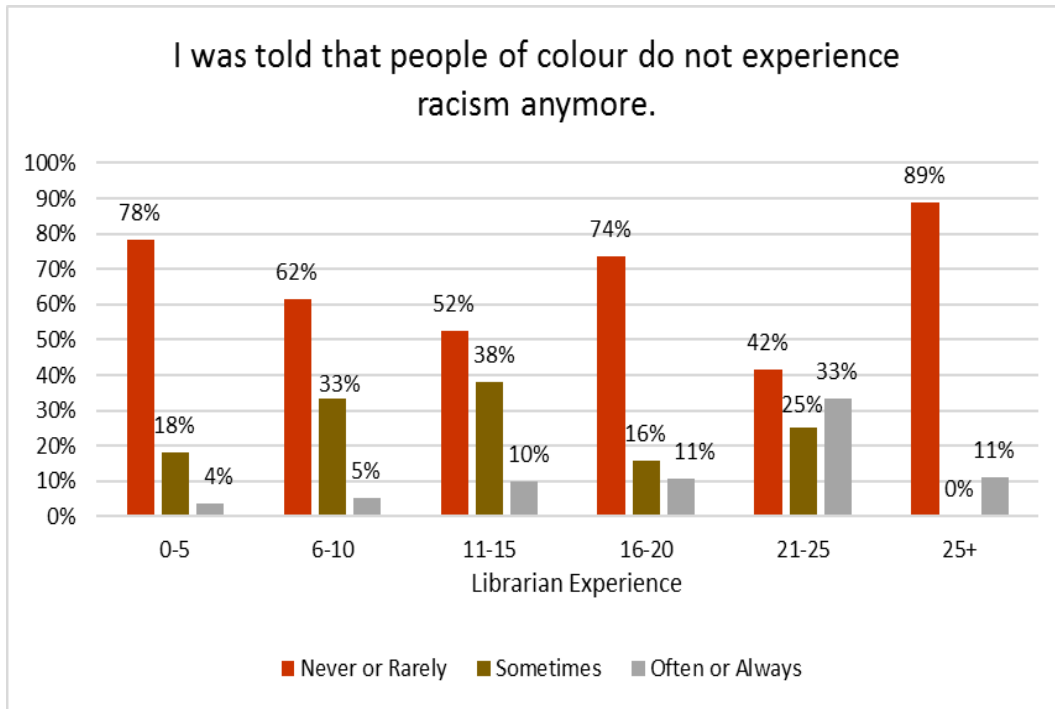
Figure 4. Experience of Microaggression #2 by Management Position



***Microaggression #3: I was told that people of colour do not experience racism anymore.***

Librarians with varying years of work experience had significantly different encounters with this microaggression ( $p = .022$ ). Librarians with fewer than five years of experience less frequently encountered this microaggression compared to those with 21-25 years of experience ( $p = .006$ ). In addition, librarians with 6-10 years of experience ran into this microaggression less often than their peers with 21-25 years of experience ( $p = .043$ ) (see Figure 5). With relevance to this type of microaggression, one librarian with 6-10 years of experience noted it was challenging “hearing White colleagues argue over the validity of racist claims - or that conversations about race are hard for them.” Another librarian with fewer than five years of experience also described her interaction with White colleagues who seemed to ignore the existence of racism: “At the height of BLM [Black Lives Matter] movement in 2020, post-George Floyd protests, I was personally asked, ‘Have you ever experienced racism in Canada?’ and when I responded I have, the questioner walked away in disbelief.” Similarly, a respondent with 11-16 years of experience observed one of her colleagues claiming that “the library shouldn’t be doing anything to celebrate Black History Month and that if they were doing something for Black history, they should be doing something special for the histories of all groups.”

Figure 5. Experience of Microaggression #3 by Librarian Experience

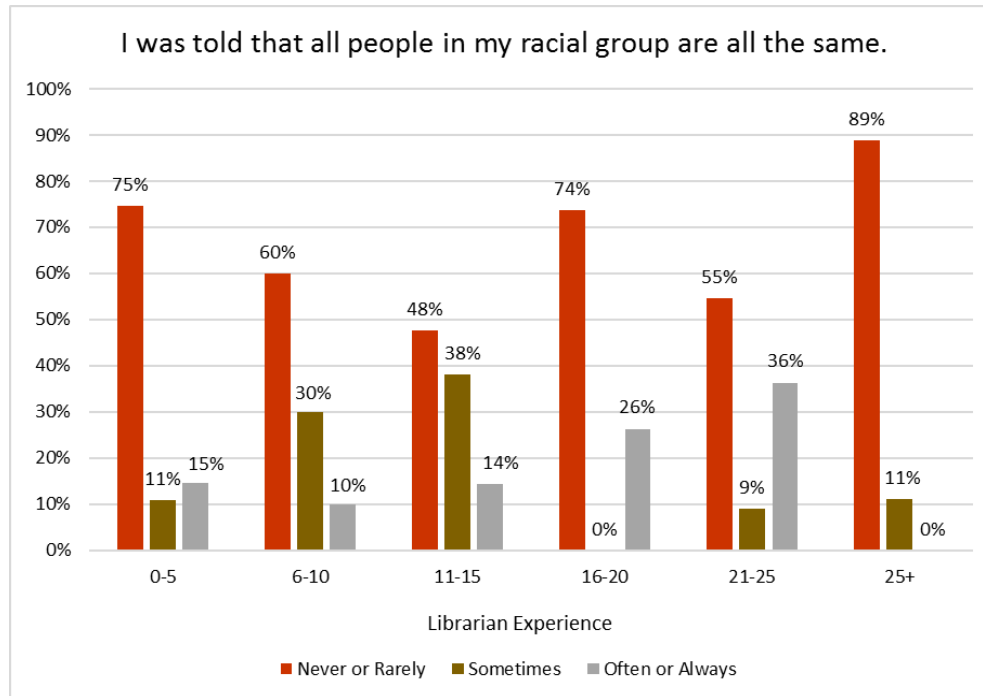


**Microaggression #4: I was told that all people in my racial group are all the same.**

Fisher’s exact test yielded a significant ( $p = .009$ ) relationship between librarians’ experiences and their encounters with this microaggression. Significant differences existed between 0-5 years and 11-15 years ( $p = .029$ ), between 6-10 years and 16-20 years ( $p = .008$ ), and between 11-15 years and 16-20 years ( $p = .008$ ). Their frequency distributions are presented in Figure 6.



Figure 6. Experience of Microaggression #4 by Librarian Experience



A couple of respondents commented that their White colleagues mistook them for someone else of the same race. A Chinese librarian with 6-10 years of experience indicated, “We were called by each other’s names, or I would be referred to as having done or said something when it wasn’t me. ...One manager couldn’t tell us apart on more than one occasion, despite us working in the same building for years.” The other Chinese librarian with 21-25 years of experience also pointed out, “I guess sometimes people do not realize that there are great differences even within a minority group, [for example], Chinese people from Mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore. [They] can be very different in language, food, and culture, and sometimes there seems to be an expectation that I, being Chinese, should know everything about Chinese when a topic comes up in conversation or project.” A South Asian librarian with 11-15 years of experience noted, “I am often asked to answer questions on behalf of my race (as though I should be a spokesperson for anyone who is the same colour).” Although not aligning entirely with the stated microaggression, four respondents encountered a situation where their race was mistaken for a different race without acknowledging that they were different. A respondent described her feeling: “I am the token BIPOC, so I am treated like I represent all BIPOCs.”

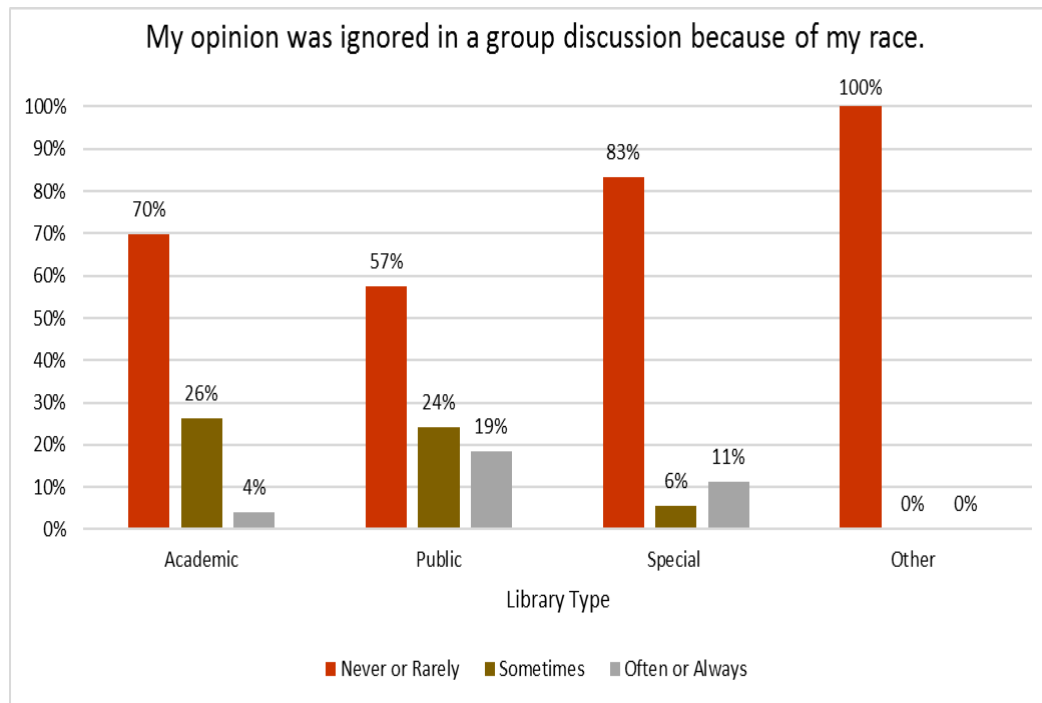
***Microaggression #5: My opinion was ignored in a group discussion because of my race.***

Fisher’s exact test yielded  $p = .023$ , suggesting that the type of libraries where respondents worked was significantly associated with their experience of this microaggression. The difference between academic and public libraries was significant ( $p = .027$ ). Academic libraries seemed to be more inclusive and respectful of opinions from VML, with 70% ( $n=53$ ) of the respondents in



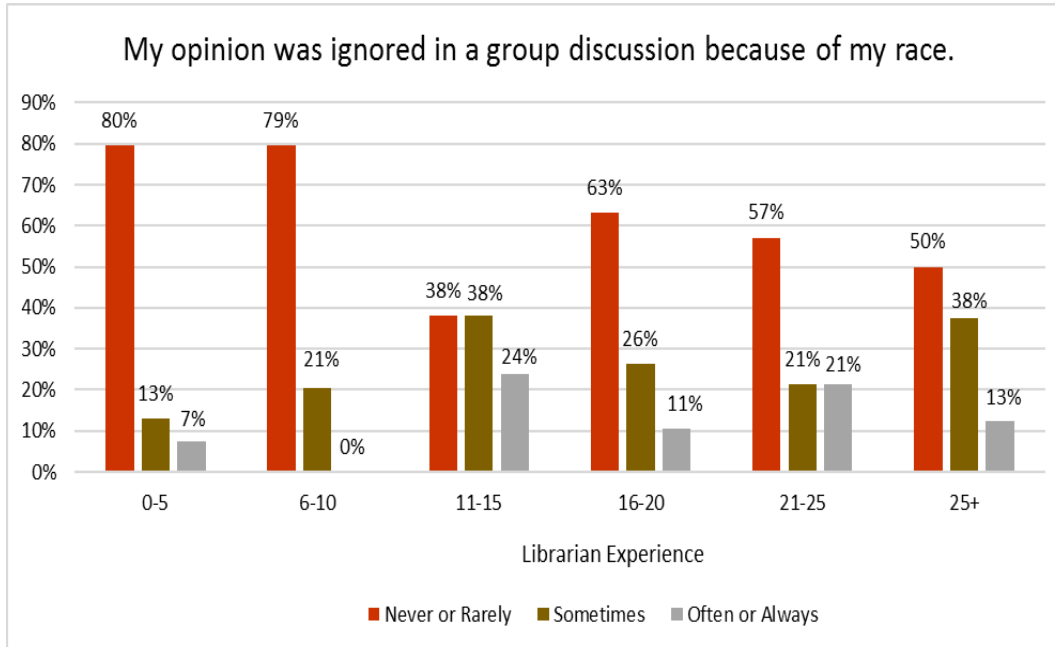
academic libraries indicating that they were never or rarely ignored in a group discussion due to race, compared to 57% (n=31) of those in public libraries. On the contrary, this microaggressive incident often or always happened to librarians in public libraries (19%, n=10), which is nearly five times as much as it happened to academic librarians (4%, n=3) (see Figure 7). This was manifested in the experience of one respondent working in a public library: “[M]y opinions are often shot down in meetings. I used to be very vocal about the racial injustices and disparities that my organization failed to recognize when dealing with BIPOC staff and patrons. I have since stopped as I was always silenced, spoken over[,] or made to believe I was being too radical.”

Figure 7. Experience of Microaggression #5 by Library Type



The length of librarians' work experience was also a significant factor in their encounters with this microaggression ( $p = .005$ ). Librarians with less than five years of experience felt ignored in a group discussion less frequently than those with 11-15 years of experience ( $p = .002$ ). Librarians with 6-10 years of experience encountered the same incident less frequently compared to librarians with 11-15 years of experience ( $p = .001$ ) and those with 21-25 years of experience ( $p = .017$ ) (see Figure 8). These findings seem to suggest that librarians who stay longer in the profession increase the likelihood of exposure to this microaggression. Curiously, those having 16-20 years and more than 25 years of experience were not significantly different from other groups, which needs further study.

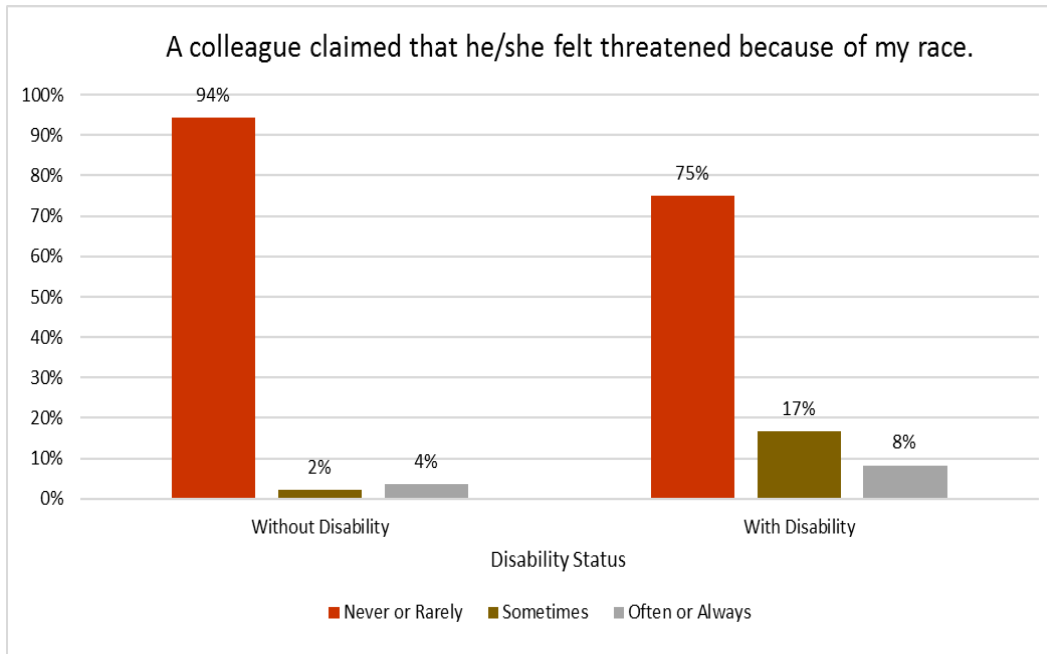
Figure 8. Experience of Microaggression #5 by Librarian Experience



***Microaggression #6: A colleague claimed that he/she felt threatened because of my race.***

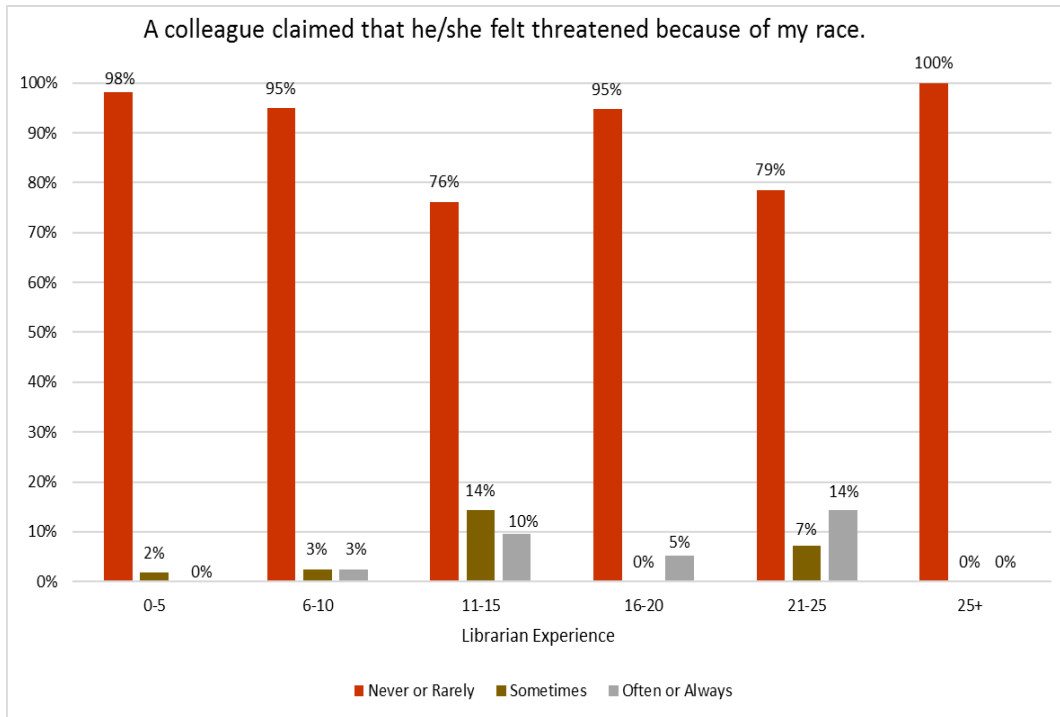
Librarians with and without disabilities differed significantly in experiencing this microaggression ( $p = .026$ ). Ninety-four percent ( $n=133$ ) of the librarians without disabilities never or rarely encountered this microaggression, compared to seventy-five percent ( $n=9$ ) of the librarians with disabilities. A much higher percentage of librarians with disabilities experienced it sometimes. Five (4%) librarians without disabilities and one (8%) librarian with disabilities indicated that they often or always encountered this microaggression (see Figure 9).

Figure 9. Experience of Microaggression #6 by Disability Status



Librarians with varied levels of work experience also differed significantly in their encounters with microaggression #6 ( $p = .032$ ). The differences existed between 0-5 years and 11-15 years ( $p = .009$ ) and between 0-5 and 21-25 years ( $p = .025$ ). Ninety-eight percent ( $n=53$ ) of the librarians with less than five years of experience never or rarely confronted this behaviour, compared to 76% ( $n=16$ ) of the group with 11-15 years of experience and 79% ( $n=11$ ) of the group with 21-25 years of experience. Ten percent ( $n=2$ ) of the group with 11-15 years of experience and 14% ( $n=2$ ) of the group with 21-25 years of experience often or always ran into this microaggression, compared to none from the group with less than five years of experience (see Figure 10). One South Asian librarian with 21-25 years of experience noted, “People of my race are [assumed to be] criminal and drug dealers...my colleague and his/her neighbours were concerned that family from my race bought a house in their neighbourhood.” Although this did not happen during an interaction at work, the recipient did feel harmed due to being stereotyped. Another librarian with 6-10 years of experience expressed her frustration because her colleague portrayed her as being aggressive and threatening due to her race.

Figure 10. Experience of Microaggression #6 by Librarian Experience

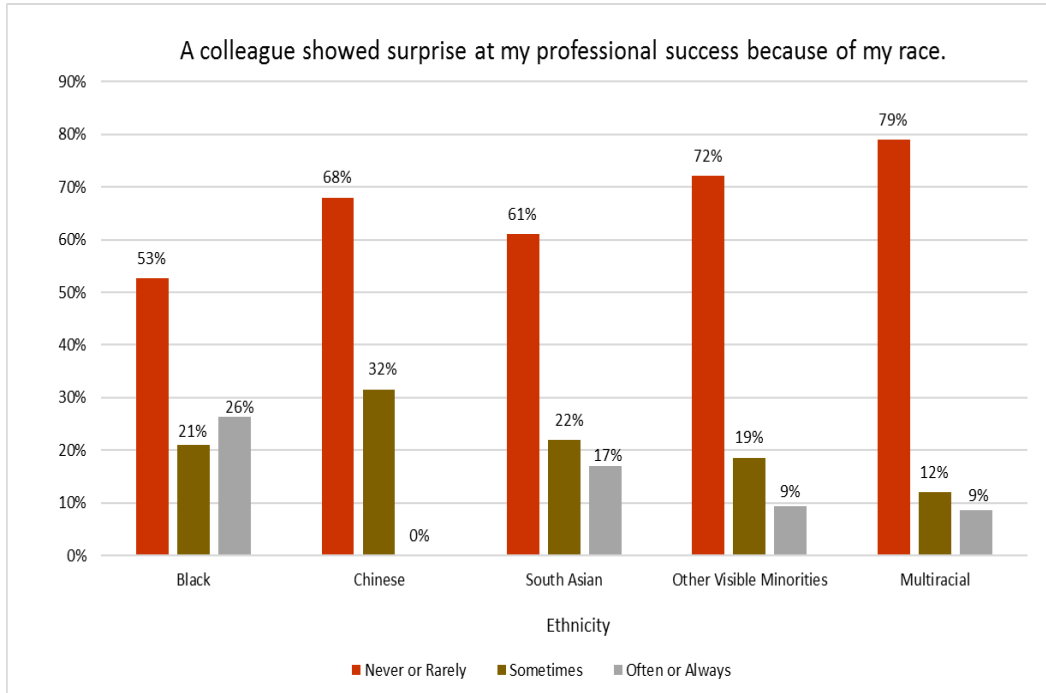


**Microaggression #7: A colleague showed surprise at my professional success because of my race.**

Librarians of various ethnic backgrounds significantly differed in their experience of this microaggression ( $p = .041$ ). Significant differences existed between Chinese and Black ( $p = .005$ ), Chinese and South Asian ( $p = .034$ ), and Chinese and multiracial librarians ( $p = .026$ ). In Figure 11, Chinese librarians had the highest rate of experiencing this microaggression sometimes (32%,  $n=12$ ), while no one encountered this often or always. Librarians in the multiracial group (79%,  $n=27$ ) most likely never or rarely experienced this incident.



Figure 11. Experience of Microaggression #7 by Ethnicity



Compared with other ethnicities, Black librarians had the highest proportion of experiencing this often or always (26%, n=5) and the lowest proportion of experiencing it never or rarely (53%, n=10). One Black librarian in the survey described what she encountered: “[A user] asks to speak with a librarian at the Reference Desk, I approach [the] user, they ask ‘Are you a librarian?’” This also echoed the findings from other research on the pervasiveness of racism, discrimination, and microaggressions experienced by Black or African librarians. In Dalton et al. (2018), the Black female law librarian’s competency and authority as a supervisor were questioned; a White patron, in a separate event, showed surprise knowing that she had attended law school. A survey of the experiences of African librarians in American academic libraries revealed that more than 40% of the respondents had encountered workplace discrimination (Ibraheem & Devine, 2013). The qualifications of Black librarians for a job were often questioned, as indicated by Curry (1994):

It seems to make little difference that those of us who make it through higher education have graduated from the same institutions, been awarded the same degrees, and received the same honors as our non-Black colleagues. Yet, questions regarding our ability still persist. (p. 303)

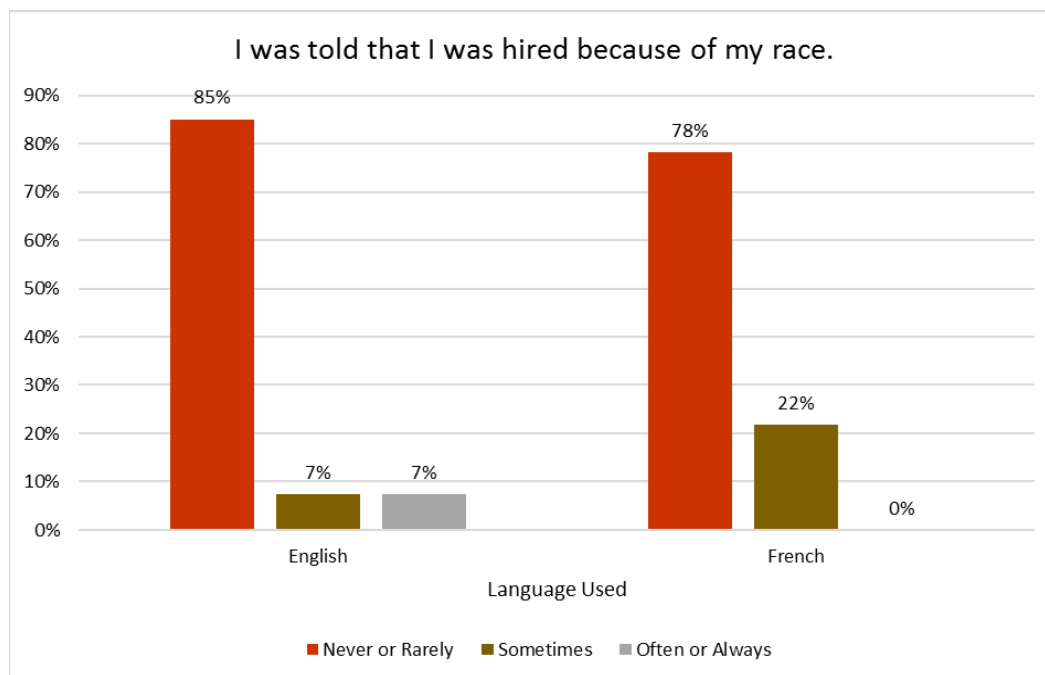
Non-Black librarians in the survey also shared their experiences that reflected the assumption of inferiority towards minority librarians. A librarian of South Asian descent described this incident: “Colleagues are surprised that I speak English well, and they constantly ask where I’m ‘really’ from because ‘obviously’ I’m not Canadian.” A librarian of Filipino descent reported encountering

this often: “Many patrons or employees within the town assumed that I held a lower position ... and would ask to speak to a librarian when I was the only one who held that position at the time.”

***Microaggression #8: I was told that I was hired because of my race.***

Of the 157 librarians who answered the question about the eighth microaggression, 134 librarians responded in English and 23 responded in French. Fisher’s exact test indicated significantly different experiences of this microaggression between the two groups using different languages in the survey ( $p = .044$ ). Eighty-five percent ( $n=114$ ) of librarians using English never or rarely experienced it, compared to 78% ( $n=18$ ) of those using French. The French survey respondents were more likely to encounter this sometimes (22% versus 7%), and no one often or always experienced it, while 7% ( $n=10$ ) of the English survey respondents did (see Figure 12). As the French survey was distributed primarily amongst Québécois library associations, all 23 respondents except one person worked in Québec. All English survey respondents worked in the other nine provinces. Hence, the findings could be interpreted as the different occurrences of microaggression between librarians in Québec and other provinces.

Figure 12. Experience of Microaggression #8 by the Language Used



In addition, when asked whether there was anything the respondents would like to share regarding their experiences of microaggressions through an open-ended text box, they depicted many microaggressive incidents that could not be classified under any of the ten stated types of microaggressions; however, their responses could offer some insights (see Appendix B).

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## Discussion

### Experiences of Microaggressions Associated with Career Stage

The survey results indicated that 69% of the respondents experienced at least one stated microaggression and 36 often or always experienced at least one stated microaggression. Each of the eight microaggressions was statistically significantly associated with various personal attributes (race/ethnicity, disability, gender identity, language used) or employment attributes (years of experience, library type, management position). Figures 1-12 show these significant relations, and further comments gathered from survey respondents showed how these microaggressions were manifested. It is interesting to note that in most cases early career librarians (0-5 years of experience) had significantly lower encounters with many of the microaggressions. While it was possible that the profession was more welcoming to these librarians, it was also possible that early career librarians were more focused on settling into their positions or careers and, unlike experienced librarians, were not recognizing or were choosing to ignore microaggressions. In contrast, librarians with more experience understood the nuances of their organizational culture and historical practices and might be keenly aware of whether subtle aggressions were intentional. As librarians worked in the field longer, their exposure to microaggressions might extend over a prolonged period, leading to an increased likelihood of reporting a higher number of such encounters.

### Experiences of Microaggressions Associated with Gender Identity

This research provides evidence that racialized librarians in Canada of different gender identities significantly differed in their experiences of this microaggression: “I was told that people of all racial groups face the same barriers in employment or promotion.” In the ViMLoC 2021 Redux Survey, most additional comments were from female respondents. They shared that their employment experiences were affected by both gender and race. A Black female librarian stated, “It is sad being a female of colour in this library system. You see other people move up quicker than the rules indicate they should (i.e., need ‘x’ amount of years being a librarian before becoming a senior librarian).” A librarian who identified as White and Chinese noted, “I have been sexualized by White men in the workplace in a way that focused on racial fetishization.” This would fit with the theme of exoticization, a microaggression very likely against Asian women, which could be interpreted as indicating that Asian women were only needed for the physical needs of White men (Sue, Bucci et al., 2007a). This is a way of demeaning the value of women in the workplace, which could cause psychological harm and constitute a barrier to their professional success.

### Experiences of Microaggressions Associated with Career Advancement

The research results suggested that with a higher management position, VML were more likely to disagree that people of all racial groups face the same barriers in employment or promotion. Unfortunately, the employment opportunities for VML have been limited, and they are underrepresented in the profession (Bonnette, 2004; Kumaran, 2015). Although all racial groups generally have to face some common career-related barriers, evidence of the metaphorical glass ceiling for specific minority groups has been documented. For instance, Chinese American librarians did not see much improvement in the percentages of top-level positions for three decades (Ruan & Xiong, 2008). In the ViMLoC 2021 Redux Survey, despite representing the most respondents, Chinese librarians (21%, n=9) were the group least represented in managerial roles

compared to Black (36%, n=9) and South Asian librarians (44%, n=11). Only 2% (n=1) of Chinese librarians were senior administrators, compared to 16% (n=4) of South Asian librarians and 8% (n=2) of Black librarians. There are many factors accounting for notable ethnic gaps in leadership. Li (2023) discussed that the underrepresentation of Chinese librarians in Canada in taking up leadership opportunities could be attributed to several reasons, including a lack of role models in leadership positions, racial background, and lack of interest in moving up the career ladder.

In the ViMLoC 2021 Redux Survey, Chinese librarians noted that microaggressions could have deferred them from moving up. As a Chinese librarian in a supervisor role indicated, “Different set of rules applied when I was applying for a management position, which made decisions easier to justify choosing other non-minority candidates.” Other ethnic groups also faced challenges that impeded employment or career advancement opportunities. A South Asian librarian in a middle management position stated, “I have been turned down for jobs because of my accent. Even though I had over 20 years supervisors experience and manager job was given to brand new graduate, and I didn’t even get an interview for the job.” Another South Asian librarian in a supervisor role was sadly surprised that a White woman with no librarian skills, experience or even the essential American Library Association (ALA)-accredited masters’ degree got the library director position. A multiracial respondent in a non-management position noted, “In past jobs, when opportunities presented themselves for promotion or to take on more responsibility, such job advances were denied. It was always the non-minority people who got promoted and given higher responsibilities.” Another librarian belonging to the “other visible minorities” group in a non-management position also mentioned having experienced discrimination during selection when applying for a job.

### Uncertainty of Instances of Microaggressions

It was noteworthy that this survey examined only ten types of microaggression. Two respondents commented that these were overt instances of microaggressions, but what they experienced was more subtle and not necessarily aligned with the questions asked. For some respondents, it was difficult to know whether the microaggressions were due to race in that they were not outright verbal. For instance, there were times when they were left out of introductions, or their turn was missed at the roundtable. They were left wondering if this was a mistake that any colleague could make or if it was something more than that. As a result, they tended to note the stated microaggressions as lower in incidence (i.e., “rarely,” “never”). This uncertainty of whether a microaggression occurred was also documented among the minority respondents (Alabi, 2015a; Sue, Capodilupo, et al., 2007b).

### Experiences of Microaggressions among VML in Québec

One of the significant strengths of this study was that it focused on Canadian VML. While data from academic librarians were included, this study had a more significant focus. Although fewer in number, this study included librarians in Québec, about whom little research has been conducted. One of the reasons could be that Québécois academic librarians in Francophone colleges and universities do not hold academic status. Thus, they are in a position that does not require scholarly publication. It could also be due to the lack of French language journals where Francophone researchers can publish their work (St-Onge et al., 2021). As this research revealed significant differences between the librarians in Québec and other provinces regarding their experience of the microaggression “I was told that I was hired because of my race,” more



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research is needed to examine their library environment to understand why this microaggression occurred.

### Limitations

This research used data from the ViMLoC 2021 Redux Survey. The survey aimed to gather information on VML in Canada and examine their demographic changes as a follow-up to the first 2013 survey. Thus, the questions about racial microaggressions constituted a small part of all questions, and due to the survey format, these questions were not very comprehensive. Only ten items were analyzed in the racial microaggressions scale, compared to 20 in Alabi (2015a) and 45 in Nadal (2011).

Second, this study was based on a relatively small sample size. There were 162 VML that completed the ViMLoC 2021 Redux Survey, comprising only 15% of the Canadian VML population, according to the 2016 census (Statistics Canada, 2018). As all questions were optional, the respondents might not answer all questions examined in this study. Thus, the total number of responses analyzed was lower than 162. It would be meaningful to do further research with a larger dataset in the future.

Third, there were uneven data representations. Most respondents were females, had less than ten years of librarian experience, and worked in permanent or full-time positions. Their high representations in the survey should be noted when we interpret the research findings. Moreover, Canada is a bilingual country with French and English populations, with French spoken by 22.8% of the population (Canadian Heritage, 2019). However, only 15% of the respondents completed the French survey. Therefore, this study might not necessarily encompass a full spectrum of microaggressions experienced by librarians in Francophone settings.

Fourth, the data regarding the representation of members from visible minorities were collected through voluntary self-identification. It is important to note that the 2021 survey employed binary biological terms, specifically “male” and “female,” which are traditionally associated with gender and are not interchangeable with gender identity. Furthermore, transgender identity was recorded as a distinct category separate from male and female identities, which could potentially have led to some reporting errors.

Finally, for performing Fisher’s exact tests, it was necessary to collapse across categories to obtain adequate cell counts. However, some information was lost when categories were combined. For instance, Arab, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, West Asian, Southeast Asian, and Latin American ethnicities were pooled as “other visible minorities,” making it impossible to distinguish between ethnic groups.

### Conclusion

Based on the data from the ViMLoC 2021 Redux Survey, this study examined experiences of racial microaggressions among VML in Canada. Previous research examined the factors associated with racial microaggressions, such as gender, ethnicity, and library type. In contrast, this research explored many other factors, including disability, work experience, management position, employment type, and language used to complete the survey. This research indicated that VML in Canada experienced racial microaggressions in various forms and frequencies. Thus, this research fills the gap in the LIS literature regarding racial microaggressions in librarianship in the

Canadian context. More research is needed to fully understand why librarians of different demographics have significant differences in the experiences of each microaggressive incident. The research findings also have practical implications. Nearly 70% of the respondents in the survey encountered at least one racial microaggression. It is concerning that microaggressions are everyday experiences amongst VML in Canada. This study demonstrates that it is important that professional library associations and libraries everywhere strengthen education about racial microaggressions and offer support to VML when they are confronted with microaggressive behaviours.

## Appendix A

### Survey Questionnaire

#### Section One: Demographic Information

1. The Canadian Employment Equity Act defines visible minorities as “persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour.” The visible minority population consists mainly of the following groups: Chinese, South Asian, Black, Arab, West Asian, Filipino, Southeast Asian, Latin American, Japanese, and Korean. Are you a visible minority librarian currently working in Canada? (If “No” is selected, the survey is closed)

- Yes
- No

2. What group do you belong to or which group fits you the best?

- Arab only (includes Egyptian, Kuwaiti and Libyan)
- Black only
- Chinese only
- Filipino only
- Japanese only
- Korean only
- Latin American only
- South Asian only (includes Bangladeshi, Indian, Pakistani, and Sri Lankan)
- Southeast Asian only (includes Vietnamese, Cambodian, Malaysian, and Laotian)
- West Asian only (includes Afghan, Assyrian, and Iranian)
- White and Arab

- 
- White and Black
  - White and Chinese
  - White and Filipino
  - White and Japanese
  - White and Korean
  - White and Latin American
  - White and South Asian
  - White and Southeast Asian
  - White and West Asian
  - White and multiple visible minorities
  - Multiple visible minorities
  - Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

3. Tell us if you are a first-generation minority librarian or not. First generation would mean that you were born elsewhere but moved to Canada at some point in your life. Second generation would mean you were born in Canada to immigrant parents. If you would like to add an explanation about this, please use the text box below, such as your age or the year when you came to Canada.

- First generation \_\_\_\_\_
- Second generation \_\_\_\_\_
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

4. Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

- Yes (please elaborate if you wish) \_\_\_\_\_
- No

5. What is your age?

- 20-25
- 26-30
- 31-35
- 36-40

- 
- 41-45
  - 46-50
  - 51-55
  - 56-60
  - 61-65
  - 65+

6. What is your gender identity?

- Female
- Male
- Transgender
- Two Spirit
- Other (please elaborate if you wish) \_\_\_\_\_
- Prefer not to answer

Section Two: Education

7. When did you receive your MLIS / MLS degree or equivalent?

- Before or during 1980
- Between 1981 and 1989
- Between 1990 and 1999
- Between 2000 and 2009
- Between 2010 and 2019
- After 2019

8. Where did you receive your MLIS / MLS degree or equivalent?

- From an ALA-accredited Canadian library school
- From an ALA-accredited American library school
- From a library school outside North America
- Other (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

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9. Please select the university where you received your degree.

- University of British Columbia
- University of Alberta
- University of Western Ontario / Western University
- University of Toronto
- University of Ottawa
- Université de Montréal
- Dalhousie University
- McGill University

10. Please specify the COUNTRY where you received your library degree: \_\_\_\_\_

11. Please provide the name of your institution: \_\_\_\_\_

12. Does your current employer recognize your professional library degree in terms of your position?

- Yes
- No

13. Have you taken any courses of study or programs in Canada to supplement your library degree?

- Yes
- No

14. Please provide the name of the course or program: \_\_\_\_\_

15. How, if at all, has this made a difference to how your employer and the library community recognize your credentials? \_\_\_\_\_

16. In addition to your MLIS / MLS degree or equivalent, please indicate other education you attained. Select all that apply.

- Professional degree (what degree? e.g., Law) \_\_\_\_\_
- Second Masters Degree (what discipline?) \_\_\_\_\_
- Third Masters Degree (what discipline?) \_\_\_\_\_
- Ph.D. (what discipline?) \_\_\_\_\_

- 
- Additional Degrees, Certificates, or Diplomas (what type?) \_\_\_\_\_
  - None of the above

### Section Three: Employment

17. How many total years have you worked as a librarian?

- 0-5
- 6-10
- 11-15
- 16-20
- 21-25
- 25+

18. What inspired you to enter the library profession? Select all that apply.

- I was inspired by a family member or friend that worked in the profession
- I got an entry-level job in a library
- Library role models influenced me
- I thought it would be an interesting profession
- I thought it would be a well-paying job
- I thought it would be a rewarding job because I would have the opportunity to help others
- I liked the work environment in a library
- I had the expertise and skills fit for the library job
- I enjoyed books and reading
- Other (please elaborate) \_\_\_\_\_

19. Which province / territory do you currently work in?

- Alberta
- British Columbia
- Manitoba
- New Brunswick

- 
- Newfoundland and Labrador
  - Northwest Territories
  - Nova Scotia
  - Nunavut
  - Ontario
  - Prince Edward Island
  - Quebec
  - Saskatchewan
  - Yukon
  - Other (if you are working for a Canadian Library outside of Canada) \_\_\_\_\_

20. What type of library are you currently working at?

- Public Library
- Regional Library
- Academic Library
- College Library
- Special Library (what type? e.g., Government, Religious Organization) \_\_\_\_\_
- School Library
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

21. Please select the job category(ies) that matches your current job responsibilities. Select all that apply.

- Acquisitions / Collection Development
- Administration
- Adult Services
- Archives
- Assessment
- Automation / Systems / IT Services
- Bibliometrics

- 
- Cataloguing / Metadata Management
  - Children's Services
  - Circulation
  - Consultant / Knowledge Management / Researchers
  - Copyright
  - Data Management and Curation
  - Digitization and Preservation
  - E-Resources and Serials
  - Government Documents
  - Instruction Services
  - Interlibrary Loan Services
  - Liaison Librarian
  - Licensing
  - Marketing / Outreach / Community Services
  - Media Specialist
  - Project Management
  - Public Services
  - Rare Books and Special Collections
  - Reference / Information Services
  - Research Services
  - School / Teacher Librarian
  - Scholarly Communications
  - User Experience
  - Web Services
  - Youth Services
  - Other (Please Specify) \_\_\_\_\_



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22. Do you work part-time (less than 30 hours/week), full-time (30 or more hours/week), or casual hours?

- Part-Time
- Full-Time
- Casual Hours
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

23. Approximately how many hours are you expected to work per week?

- 20 hours or less
- 21-25
- 26-30
- 31-35
- 36-40
- 40+
- No hours specified (until the job is done)

24. What type of appointment do you have?

- Permanent
- Temporary (e.g., contract, limited-term)
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

25. What is your gross (before taxes) yearly salary from your employing library?

- \$10,000 or less
- \$10,001-\$20,000
- \$20,001-\$30,000
- \$30,001-\$40,000
- \$40,001-\$50,000
- \$50,001-\$60,000
- \$60,001-\$70,000
- \$70,001-\$80,000

- 
- \$80,001-\$90,000
  - \$90,001-\$100,000
  - \$100,001-\$110,000
  - \$110,001-\$120,000
  - \$120,001-\$130,000
  - \$130,001-\$140,000
  - \$140,001-\$150,000
  - \$150,001+
  - Prefer not to answer

26. Please describe your experience with respect to the following statements:

(1) I am treated with respect and accepted as an equal member by colleagues in my department.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

(2) My knowledge and work contributions are valued by colleagues in my department.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

(3) I feel free to speak my mind and express my views openly amongst colleagues in my department.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree or disagree

- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

27. Racial microaggressions are subtle hostile, derogatory, or negative slights and insults (verbal, nonverbal, and/or visual) directed toward people of colour, whether intentional or unintentional. Please rate how frequently you have experienced each of the following forms of racial microaggressions throughout your career (Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Always)

- (1) I was told that people should not think about race anymore.
- (2) I was told that people of all racial groups face the same barriers in employment or promotion.
- (3) I was told that people of colour do not experience racism anymore.
- (4) I was told that I was overly sensitive about issues of race.
- (5) I was told that all people in my racial group are all the same.
- (6) My opinion was ignored in a group discussion because of my race.
- (7) A colleague assumed that I would have a lower English proficiency because of my race.
- (8) A colleague claimed that he/she felt threatened because of my race.
- (9) A colleague showed surprise at my professional success because of my race.
- (10) I was told that I was hired because of my race.

28. Other forms of racial microaggressions you have experienced throughout your career:

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29. Overall, how satisfied are you with your current job?

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

30. What level is your current position?

- Non-Management
- Supervisor
- Middle Management (e.g., Branch Head, Department Head)

- 
- Senior Administrator (e.g., Head / Chief Librarian, Director, or Deputy / Assistant Head, Chief, Director)

31. Please indicate the extent to which race or ethnicity is a barrier to your library career aspirations?

- Not at all
- To a small extent
- To some extent
- To a moderate extent
- To a great extent
- To a very great extent

32. Have you ever sought support from a mentor?

- Yes
- No

33. Have you participated in any formal mentorship program(s)?

- Yes (what program?) \_\_\_\_\_
- No

34. Have you ever had a mentor who is a member of visible minority group?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

35. How helpful do you think the mentors have been in your career development?

- Extremely helpful
- Very helpful
- Moderately helpful
- Slightly helpful
- Not at all helpful

36. Please use the box below to add anything else that we may have missed asking you or that you would like to share: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Appendix B

### Additional Responses about Experiences of Racial Microaggressions

- “A colleague said that after vacation, they are going to be ‘as dark as I am’.”
- “A co-worker told me that Latinos are good for the local economy because they are in the least interesting jobs in the population and would be vacant if Latinos didn't take them.”
- “A colleague told me that a colleague of Arab origin sometimes has a difficult character for cultural reasons.”
- “A librarian said to me, ‘you look like you're going to punch something’ while I was looking for a stapler at the reference desk. My face was just unsmiling, not anger, just unsmiling. Why must black women have to be performing and happy all day long?”
- “Being told that Asian people do not count as a minority or count as White.”
- “Comments about my natural hair that was demeaning (not the typical Eurocentric version of what nice hair should be).”
- “I'm aware that there are several Filipino nurses, but working in a hospital, I've had people assume I'm a nurse right away because I am Filipino.”
- “I have experienced preferential treatment between me and another colleague (white) where we both asked for the same thing (at different times), and they would get a ‘Yes’ immediately while I would get an explanation why I can ask for it this time but not next time.”
- “I have had enough of feeling invalidated by others and tired of feeling invalidated by myself, after absorbing years of microaggressions in my personal and professional life.”
- “I won a scholarship to attend a conference sponsored by a Canadian university. The criteria for the scholarship were for librarians in particular demographic groups, including visible minorities, those with disabilities, and those with financial needs. I shared my win with a White colleague (same level/position, i.e., equals), and she commented something along the lines of ‘I guess it doesn't hurt to be brown then’.”
- “In a meeting, a library colleague stated that folks from a particular area of our city would not appreciate arts programming so we should not host the arts program we were discussing in that area. This area of the city has a lot of racialized folks and although the staff did not say it explicitly, it seemed like he was indicating folks of colour would not appreciate arts-based programming.”
- “It was during a Christmas party and people made comments that reflected cultural stereotypes of Jamaican people.”
- “Lots of microaggressions from patrons that are often also forms of sexual harassment.”

- 
- “My White supervisors and managers never seem to consult me on projects/issues, to look for ‘minority’ perspective, because of my lower status in the hierarchy.”
  - “People suggesting racism against White people isn’t a thing, thereby perpetuating idea and acceptability of rude/racist people of colour.”
  - “Sometimes angry/problem patrons refer to my race or language accent in a negative way.”
  - “Sometimes I get seemingly nice comments about my physical appearance or accent. For example, ‘Surely the professors and students of your faculty like you because you are exotic and you have a nice accent’, I have already had my hair touched without permission to tell me ‘How beautiful! You have a lot of them!’ or being touched without permission to ask me how I got that tan. These are gestures and comments probably made with good intentions, but very uncomfortable for me.”

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