Engaging First Year Students in Conversations about Identity, Responsibility and “Double Consciousness”

Alyssa Brissett (she/her)
University of Southern California (USC) Libraries
What I will cover

• Background
• Goals for the microseminar
• Overview of discussion and the themes that emerged
• What I would do differently
What are micro-seminars?

- Mini workshop/guided discussion
  - Faculty and students engage in an informal setting
  - First year students interact with peers with similar interests
- Two 90 minute sessions over two days
- 20 students
Why this topic

- Discuss a really popular movie that mirrors real life issues
- Engage with undergraduate students outside of library instruction and orientations
- Consider the ways we negotiate to fit in - and what impact that might have on ourselves
- Consider how our historical and cultural context influences and informs how we move around various spaces
Goals for the micro-seminar

- Use the theory of double consciousness and themes from the film Black Panther to examine how "twoness" informs construction of personal identity

- Identify ways we navigate and negotiate our identities to fit in and/or find a safe space in campus environments where we might be ‘othered’.

- Identify strategies for self-care in these moments of “otherness”
Overview of discussion

- Responsibility to a particular group – how that might impact our own movement in spaces
- Self-preservation and self-care – moving around spaces where we are not represented and managing those experiences
- Seeing yourself through the world’s view of you – can this affect how you represent yourself? How can this impact your role as a new college student?
What students had to say

- Making the effort to find groups and communities on campus where you feel more safe to avoid (or reduce) being misgendered

- Choosing to live on the Black floor or in the Black dorm when you grew up in an area that was predominantly white

- Attending events and social meetups related to your race, or your ethnicity when you were adopted and grew up in a white household
What would I do differently?

- More focus on experiences that we don’t often see - microaggressions and how we might resist or react in the moment
- More opportunities and exercises to pair up and work in smaller groups
- Less focus on the film and characters and more about real-life experiences
Thanks!

Alyssa Brissett
Social Work Librarian
USC Libraries

Twitter: @lysslibrarian
Email: abrisset@usc.edu