


12-15-2022

## Racial and Ethnic Categories: Impact on Medical Subject Headings

Jamia Williams  
*University of Utah*

Aidy Weeks  
*University of Nevada, Las Vegas, aidybert.weeks@unlv.edu*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/libfacpresentation>

 Part of the [Cataloging and Metadata Commons](#), and the [Health Sciences and Medical Librarianship Commons](#)

---

### Repository Citation

Williams, J., Weeks, A. (2022, December). Racial and Ethnic Categories: Impact on Medical Subject Headings. Presentation at Office of Management and Budget Interagency Working Group Closed Listening Session, Online.

Available at: <https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/libfacpresentation/221>

This Presentation is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by Digital Scholarship@UNLV with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this Presentation in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/or on the work itself.

This Presentation has been accepted for inclusion in Library Faculty Presentations by an authorized administrator of Digital Scholarship@UNLV. For more information, please contact [digitalscholarship@unlv.edu](mailto:digitalscholarship@unlv.edu).

# Racial and Ethnic Categories: Impact on Medical Subject Headings

---

Thursday, December 15th, 2022

# Hello!



**Jamia Williams, MLS**  
Medical Library Association  
Chair-Elect,  
Social Justice & Health  
Disparities Caucus



**Aidy Weeks, MSLIS, AHIP**  
Medical Library Association  
Immediate Past Chair,  
Latinx Caucus



# Outline

- I. Presentation Focus
- II. Medical Subject Headings
- III. Solutions
- IV. Broad Implications
- V. Racial/Ethnic Categories
- VI. Recommendations
- VII. Q & A

# Presentation Focus:

1. Whether the **minimum reporting categories** should be changed and how to best address detailed **race and ethnicity groups** in the Standards;

# How is this all **connected?**

## Federal Definitions Workflow

Informs library terminologies

### Office of Management & Budget

determines racial and ethnic categories  
(Directive 15; 1977, 1997)

### National Library of Medicine

assigns **medical subject headings (Mesh)** based on federal definitions.

## PubMed/Medline

Impacts over **34 million** citations and **abstracts** of biomedical literature



# Black or African American Populations

## OMB Definition:

Black or African American – **A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa.** Terms such as “Haitian” or “Negro” can be used in addition to “Black or African American.”

## Problematic & Outdated terminology in the definition:

- Haitian = national origin not someone's race
- The terminology Negro is outdated so this should be revised

# Black or African American Populations

## Revised Definition:

A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa. There is not one global term for individuals of the African Diaspora. Individuals may identify as Black, African American, or by their country of origin.



# Hispanic or Latino Populations

**OMB Definition:** Hispanic or Latino – A person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.



**Latino (West Coast) vs. Hispanic (East Coast)**



## Gender-Inclusive terms:

Latinx (2016–Present)

Latine

Scoping Assessment: <https://osf.io/usvw8>

## National Origins:

Mexican

Cuban

Dominican

Puerto Rican

Chilean

Brazilian

# Hispanic or Latino Populations

## Revised Definition:

Hispanic or Latino or Latinx/Latine: A person of or descendent from Latin American national origin, regardless of race.

# Additional Race/Ethnic Categories

- Alaska Native Subject Headings Project:  
<https://www.aklib.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/AKNSH-Implementation-Plan.pdf>
- Misrepresentation in the Surrogate: Author Critiques of “Indians of North America” Subject Headings: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01639374.2022.2090039>
- Improving Library Subject Headings for Iowa Indigenous Peoples:  
<https://www.iastatedigitalpress.com/iscore/article/id/14466/>
- Rooted in the Past: Use of “East Indians” in Library of Congress Subject Headings:  
[https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01639374.2017.1386253?casa\\_token=Dn7ZioUMX2AAAAAA%3AO6irfr7J2uAzmUISx9nUo0P0NTI2tmgzolwEisDGsBE4kD-C3IOgKk76\\_RDxMrR9PZO\\_MYBA3dec](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01639374.2017.1386253?casa_token=Dn7ZioUMX2AAAAAA%3AO6irfr7J2uAzmUISx9nUo0P0NTI2tmgzolwEisDGsBE4kD-C3IOgKk76_RDxMrR9PZO_MYBA3dec)
- Searching for Paumanok: Methodology for a Study of Library of Congress Authorities and Classifications for Indigenous Long Island, New York:  
[https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01639374.2021.1989640?casa\\_token=zdojb\\_XkVPEAAAAA%3AzEYPKjta5ZSOoaVIJHqvdswh39StX\\_aBige2MRyDcFpOOO6lOK7hhuethpF69jG\\_wa9L4lpR\\_9o](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01639374.2021.1989640?casa_token=zdojb_XkVPEAAAAA%3AzEYPKjta5ZSOoaVIJHqvdswh39StX_aBige2MRyDcFpOOO6lOK7hhuethpF69jG_wa9L4lpR_9o)

# Broad Implications Slide

## Researcher/Scholar/Librarian Impact

Researchers and scholars within the biomedical and health sciences have to adopt the minimum reporting categories, and include them as **author keywords** so that their research is findable.

## Patient/Communities Impact

Patient self-identification in studies is important. Being limited to certain categories can create **hidden patient populations** making it more difficult to accurately study.

## Commercial Impact

**Medical Subject Headings** are used by these commercial databases:

- Embase/Medline
- Ovid/Medline
- CINAHL
- APA PsycInfo

# Our Recommendations

## Minimum Reporting Categories:

- Continue **Black and African American** but update and expand definition
- Update the **Hispanic or Latino** term to reflect gender inclusive terms (ex. Latinx/Latine), encompass Caribbean identities and Latin American national origin.

# Our Recommendations

## Communications:

- Communicate changes **directly** to the National Library of Medicine
- Encourage **federal/non-federal partnerships** such as the MLA/NLM when reviewing terms
- Have **non-federal librarians** involved in the process

# Question & Answers:

**We thank you** for the opportunity to participate in this listening session and will now take questions from the group.

Mary Langman  
Director of Information, Issues, & Policy  
[mary.langman@mlahq.org](mailto:mary.langman@mlahq.org)