

Racial microaggressions are

Brief and commonplace

daily

verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities,

whether intentional or unintentional,

that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative slights and insults

to the target person or group.

- Derald Wing Sue et al.

Theme	Microaggression	Message
Alien in own land Assuming that Asian Americans and Latinos are all foreign-born.	“Where are you from?” “Where were you born?” “You speak good English.”	You are not American. You are a foreigner.
Ascription of intelligence Assigning intelligence to a person of color on the basis of their race	“You are a credit to your race.” “You are so articulate.” Asking an Asian person to help with a math or science problem.	People of color are generally not as intelligent as whites. It is unusual for someone of your race to be intelligent. All Asians are good in math / sciences.
Color blindness Statements that indicate that a white person does not want to acknowledge race	“When I look at you, I don’t see color.” “America is a melting pot.” “There is only one race, the human race.”	Denying a person of color’s racial / ethnic experiences. Assimilate / acculturate to the dominant culture. Denying the individual is a racial / cultural being.
Criminality – assumption of criminal status Assuming a person of color is dangerous, criminal, or deviant on the basis of their race.	A white person clutching their purse or checking their wallet as a black or Latino approaches. A store owner following a customer of color around. A white person waits to ride the next elevator when a person of color is on it.	You are a criminal. You are going to steal. / You are poor. / You do not belong. / You are dangerous.
Denial of individual racism When whites deny their racial biases.	“I’m not a racist. I have several black friends.” “As a woman, I know what you go through as a racial minority.”	I am immune to racism because I have friends of color. Your racial oppression is no different than my gender oppression. I can’t be a racist. I’m like you.

<p>Myth of meritocracy Saying that race does not play a role in life successes.</p>	<p>“I believe the most qualified person should get the job.” “Everyone can succeed in this society, if you work hard enough.”</p>	<p>People of color are given extra unfair benefits. People of color are lazy and/or incompetent and need to work harder.</p>
<p>Pathologizing cultural values / communication styles The notion that values and communication styles of the dominant / white culture are ideal.</p>	<p>Asking a black person: “Why do you have to be so loud / animated? Just calm down.” To an Asian or Latino person: “Why are you so quiet? We want to know what you think. Speak up more.” Dismissing an individual who brings up race / culture in work / school setting.</p>	<p>Assimilate to the dominant culture. Leave your cultural baggage outside.</p>
<p>Second-class citizen When a white person is given preferential treatment as a consumer over a person of color.</p>	<p>Person of color mistaken for a service worker. Being ignored at a store counter as attention is given to the white customer behind you. “You people...”</p>	<p>People of color are servants to whites. They couldn’t possibly occupy high-status positions. You are likely to cause trouble. Whites are more valued customers. You don’t belong. You are a lesser being.</p>
<p>Environmental microaggression Broader-level microaggressions, which are more apparent on systemic and environmental levels</p>	<p>Television shows and movies that feature predominantly white people, without representation of people of color. Overcrowding of public schools in communities of color. Overabundance of liquor stores in communities of color.</p>	<p>You don’t belong. / You won’t succeed here. There is only so far you can go. You are an outsider. / You don’t exist. People of color don’t / shouldn’t value education. People of color are deviant.</p>

From “Racial microaggressions in everyday life: Implications for clinical practice” by Derald Wing Sue, Christina M. Capodilupo, Gina C. Torino, Jennifer M. Bucceri, Aisha M. B. Holder, Kevin L. Nadal, and Marta Esquilin. *American Psychologist* 62:4 (2007), pages 271-286.