

‘What are Microaggressions?’

MICROAGGRESSION

“Brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioural and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory or negative racial slights and insults that potentially have a harmful or unpleasant psychological impact on the target person or group”

Microaggressions are often so pervasive and automatic in daily interactions that they are often overlooked and unacknowledged



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Microaggressions may occur outside conscious awareness

- Some well-intentioned individuals may unconsciously engage in these discriminatory actions. Regardless, these acts of discrimination can significantly harm the victims.
- Unfortunately, through selective perception, many white individuals are unlikely to hear the inadvertent racial slights that are made in their presence. As a result, white individuals may unconsciously perpetuate Euro-centric attitudes of white supremacy and, in effect, cause individuals of colour to feel invalidated or inferior.

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Racial Microaggressions seem to appear in three forms:

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1. Microassault (Often conscious)

- Explicit racial derogations characterized primarily by a violent verbal or nonverbal attack meant to hurt the intended victim through name-calling, avoidant behaviour or purposeful discriminatory actions.
- Microassaults are most similar to 'old-fashioned' forms of racism in that they are deliberate and conscious acts by the aggressor.
- **Examples of Microassaults:**
- Deliberately serving a white patron before a person of colour.
- Referring to someone as "coloured" or "Oriental."
- white parents discourage a son or daughter from dating a person of colour.
- Displaying racist caricatures or memorabilia.



Racial Microaggressions seem to appear in three forms:

2. Microinsult (Often unconscious)

- A behavioural action or verbal remark that conveys rudeness, insensitivity, or demeans a person's racial identity or heritage.
- Microinsults represent subtle snubs, frequently unknown to the perpetrator, but clearly convey a hidden insulting message to the recipient of colour.

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Types of Microinsults:

1. Ascription of Intelligence: assigning intelligence to a person of color on the basis of their race.

Examples:

- “You people always do well in school.”
- “You are a credit to your race.”
- “If I see lots of Asian students in my class, I know it’s going to be a hard class.”



Types of Microinsults:

2.Second Class Citizen: Occurs when a white person is given preferential treatment as a consumer over a person of color.

Examples:

- “You people...”
- Person of color mistaken for a service worker.
- Being ignored at a store counter as attention is given to the white customer behind you.

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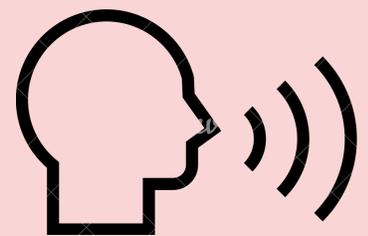


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3.Pathologizing Cultural

Values/Communication Styles: the notion that the values and communication styles of the dominant/white culture are ideal and those of people of colour are abnormal.



Examples:

- Asking a Black person: “Why do you have to be so loud/animated? Just calm down.”
- Asking an Asian person: “Why are you so quiet? We want to know what you think. Be more verbal.” “Speak up more.”

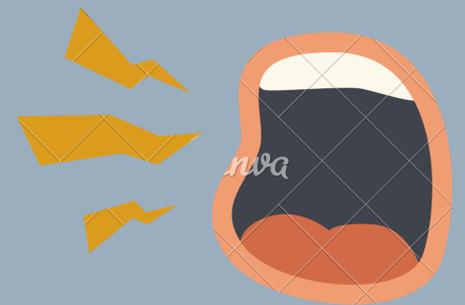
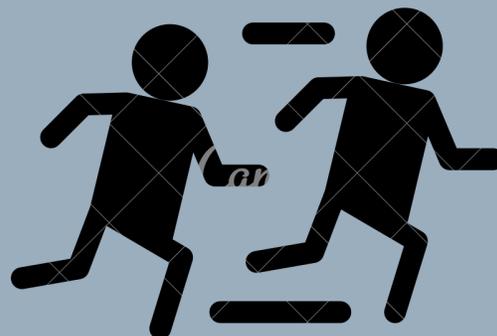
Types of Microinsults:

4. Assumption of Criminal Status:

Status: a person of color is presumed to be dangerous, criminal, or deviant on the basis of their race.

Examples:

- A store owner following a customer of colour around the store.
- A white person waits to ride the next elevator when a person of color is on it.



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Third Form of Racial Microaggressions

Microinvalidation (Often unconscious)

- Verbal comments or behaviors that exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of a person of color.

Types of Microinvalidations:

1. Alien in Own Land: assumption that visible racial/ethnic minority citizens are foreigners.

Examples:

- “Where are you really from?”
- “You speak good English.”



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Types of Microinvalidations:

2.Colour Blindness: denial or pretense that a white person does not see colour or race.

Examples:

- “When I look at you, I don’t see colour.”
- “There is only one race, the human race.”

3.Myth of Meritocracy: statements which assert that race plays a minor role in life success.

Examples:

- “Everyone can succeed in this society, if they work hard enough.”
- “I believe the most qualified person should get the job.”



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Types of Microinvalidations:

4. Denial of Individual Racism:

Denial of personal racism or one's role in its perpetuation.

Examples:

- “I’m not racist. I have several Black friends.”
- “As a woman, I know what you go through as a racial minority.”



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Check out these Ontario-based community organizations involved in racial justice work on Instagram!

- **Butterfly: Asian and Migrant Sex Worker Support Network** [@butterflycsw](#) an organization that provides support to, and advocates for, the rights of Asian and migrant sex workers
- **Circles for Reconciliation** [@circlesforreconciliation](#) a non-profit organization working to establish trusting and meaningful relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples
- **The Chinese Canadian National Council Toronto Chapter** [@CCNCTO](#) an organization that works with Chinese Canadian community members to promote equity, social justice, inclusive civic participation, and respect for diversity
- **The Council of Agencies Serving South Asians (CASSA)** [@cassaonline](#) an umbrella organization supporting and advocating for the needs of the Canadian South Asian community



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READ MORE



- **The National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM) @nccm_community** an organization that protects Canadian human rights and civil liberties, challenges discrimination and Islamophobia, builds mutual understanding, and advocates for the public concerns of Canadian Muslims
- **Ontario Alliance of Black School Educators @onabse_org** an organization that works to promote equity for African Canadian students, educators, and professionals at all levels in schools
- **Platform @platform_ca** civic leadership for young Black, Indigenous, and racialized women & gender-diverse people
- **Tamil Canadian Centre for Civic Action (TCCCA) @tamilcivicaction** an organization working towards the success of all Tamil Canadians in the social, political, economic and cultural spheres of Canada
- **Urban Alliance on Race Relations (UARR) @uarrtoronto** non-profit organization working to address inequality with educational programs, advocacy & research

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Works Cited

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