

Examples of Microaggressions

	Theme	Microaggression Examples	Message
Race	Assumptions of criminality	<p>A security guard following a Black person, presuming that they are going to cause damage or steal.</p> <p>While walking through the halls of a College building, a security guard approaches a black member of staff to ask if she/he is lost, even though she/he is in a group with other staff members.</p>	<p>You are a criminal.</p> <p>You are going to steal/you are poor, you do not belong.</p> <p>You are dangerous.</p>
	Objectification/tokenism (e.g. when BAME people are objectified or treated as tokens).	<p>“What are you? You’re so interesting looking!”</p> <p>“she is so exotic”.</p> <p>“how do you get your hair like that?!”</p>	<p>You are a perpetual foreigner in your own country.</p> <p>Your ethnic/racial identity makes you exotic.</p> <p>You are outside of the norm.</p>
	Assumptions of intellectual inferiority (e.g. BAME people are assumed to be less intelligent or capable than white people).	<p>“You’re so articulate”.</p> <p>“you speak English so well”.</p>	<p>BAME people are generally not as intelligent as White people.</p>
	Denigrating cultural values/communication styles (e.g. the notion that the values and communication styles of the dominant/White culture are ideal/“normal”).	<p>To an East Asian person: “Why are you so quiet? We want to know what you think. Be more verbal.”</p> <p>“Speak up more.”</p>	<p>Assimilate to dominant culture.</p> <p>Leave your cultural baggage outside.</p> <p>There is no room for difference.</p>

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		Asking a Black person: “Why do you have to be so loud/animated/aggressive? Just calm down.”	
	Colour blindness (e.g. statements that indicate that a White person does not want to or need to acknowledge race).	<p>“When I look at you, I don’t see colour.”</p> <p>“There is only one race, the human race.”</p> <p>“All lives matter!”</p>	Denying the significance of BAME people’s racial/ethnic experience and history.
Gender	Sexual objectification (e.g. when a woman is treated as a sexual object).	Commenting on the appearance/attractiveness of a female colleague.	The most important thing about a woman is the way that she looks.
	Assumptions of traditional gender roles (e.g. when an individual assumes that a woman needs to uphold traditional gender roles).	<p>A person asks a woman her age and, upon hearing she is 31, looks quickly at her ring finger.</p> <p>An advisor asks a female student if she is planning on having children while in postdoctoral training.</p> <p>Labelling an assertive female committee chair/dean as a “b____,” while describing a male counterpart as a “forceful leader.”</p>	<p>Women should be married during child-bearing ages because that is their primary purpose.</p> <p>Women cannot have children and be successful in their studies/career.</p> <p>Assertiveness in women is undesirable and women should be submissive.</p>
	Assumptions of inferiority e.g. when a woman is assumed to be physically or intellectually incompetent, particularly in comparison to men).	<p>Female doctor mistaken for a nurse.</p> <p>“You look too young to work here”.</p>	Women occupy nurturing positions/They couldn’t possibly occupy high status positions.

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LGBTQ+	Use of heterosexist or transphobic terminology (e.g. when offensive language is used towards or about LGBTQ+ people).	For instance, the use of the word “gay” casually when describing someone as weak.	Being gay is negative/all gay people are weak.
	Discomfort/disapproval of LGBTQ+ experience (e.g. when LGBTQ+ individuals are treated with disrespect or condemnation because of their sexual orientation or gender presentation).	A person staring at a same-sex couple holding hands.	It is not normal to be in a same-sex relationship.
	Assumption of sexual pathology and abnormality (e.g. when LGBTQ+ persons are presumed to be oversexualised or sexual deviants).	Assumption that an LGBTQ+ person will automatically be attracted to them.	LGBTQ+ people are oversexualised.
	Assumption of heterosexuality/cis gender	Assuming that someone’s partner is of the opposite sex to them. Assuming there are no LGBTQ+ people in the room e.g. saying ‘We never get any LGBTQ+ people coming to our meetings’. Assuming pronouns.	LGBTQ+ people are very rare, not normal. LGBTQ+ people are all instantly identifiable.
	Lack of thought around LGBTQ+ issues	Arranging fieldwork, meetings in a country with strong anti - LGBTQ+ laws, without acknowledging possible uncomfortable situation (or even risk?) for colleagues (e.g. asking if they are ok with it).	I am not aware of LGBTQ+ issues and people.

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Religion	Endorsing religious stereotypes (e.g. when people make presumptions about religious minority groups).	Someone makes a joke about Muslim people being terrorists or Jewish people being cheap.	Stereotypes are true of all people of a religion/religious group.
	Denigration of different religious groups (e.g. when someone judges another religion as being inferior or substandard).	Placing less/no value on non-Christian holidays or traditions. “It’s ridiculous that they are fasting during exam time”.	Assimilate to dominant culture. Leave your cultural baggage outside. There is no room for difference.
Disability	Assumptions of inferiority (e.g. when a disabled person is assumed to be physically or intellectually incompetent, particularly in comparison to those without a disability).	Raising your voice or speaking slowly when addressing a blind student. “The way you have overcome your disability is so inspiring”.	A person with a disability is defined as lesser in all aspects of physical and mental functioning.
All	Denial (e.g. a statement made when bias is denied).	“I’m not racist. I have several Black friends.” “As a woman, I know what you go through as a racial minority.” To a Black person: “Are you sure you were being followed in the store? I can’t believe it.”	I could never be racist because I have Black friends. Your racial oppression is no different than my gender oppression. I can’t be a racist. I’m like you. Denying the personal experience of individuals who experience bias.
	Myth of meritocracy (e.g. statements which assert that race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity etc.	“I believe the most qualified person should get the job. We need excellence!”	The playing field is even, so if Women/BAME/Disabled/LGBTQ+ people cannot make it, the problem is with them.

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	<p>does not play a role in life successes).</p>	<p>“Men and women have equal opportunities for achievement.”</p> <p>“Gender plays no part in who we hire.”</p> <p>“Everyone can succeed in this society, if they work hard enough.”</p> <p>“Positive action is racist.”</p>	<p>Black people are given extra unfair benefits because of their race.</p>
	<p>Second-class citizen (e.g. when a target group member receives differential treatment from the dominant group).</p>	<p>Black Academic mistaken for a service worker.</p> <p>Saying “You people...”</p> <p>An Academic assigns a Black post-doctoral student to escort a visiting scientist of the same race even though there are other non-Black scientists in this person’s specific area of research.</p> <p>A Head of Department sends an email to a work colleague describing another individual as a “good female scientist.”</p> <p>In class, a Lecturer tends to call on male students more frequently than female ones.</p>	<p>BAME people are servants to White people. They couldn’t possibly occupy high status positions.</p> <p>You don’t belong. You are a lesser being.</p> <p>People should associate with others of their own race.</p> <p>A female academic is good at her job, despite her gender.</p> <p>The contributions of female students are less worthy than the contributions of male students.</p>

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Adapted from:

https://academicaffairs.ucsc.edu/events/documents/Microaggressions_Examples_Arial_2014_11_12.pdf

Sue, Derald Wing, *Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender and Sexual Orientation*, Wiley & Sons, 2010.

Nadal, Kevin L., A Guide to Responding to Microaggressions, *CUNY FORUM* 2:1 (2014) 71-76 https://advancingjustice-la.org/sites/default/files/ELAMICRO%20A_Guide_to_Responding_to_Microaggressions.pdf