

Microaggressions which are “brief, everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages” to a target group like multicultural and multiracial persons, religious and ethnic minorities, women, persons with disabilities, and LGBT individuals (Sue & Sue, 2008).

Table 6.1 Examples of Microaggressions

Themes	Microaggressions	Message
Alien in Own Land	“You speak good English.”	You are not American.
Ascription of Intelligence	“Wow! How did you become so good at math?”	It is unusual for a woman to be smart in math.
Colorblindness	“When I look at you, I don’t see color”	Denying a person of color’s race/ethnic experiences
Criminality/Assumption of Criminal Status	A store owner following a customer of color around the store.	You are going to steal/You are poor/You do not belong.
Use of Sexist/Heterosexist Language	Two options for Relationship Status: Married or Single	LGB partnerships do not matter/are meaningless.
Denial of Individual Racism/Sexism/Heterosexism/Religious Discrimination	“As an employer, I always treat men and women equally.”	I am incapable of sexism.
Myth of Meritocracy	“Men and women have equal opportunities for achievement.”	The playing field is even; so if women cannot make it, the problem is with them.
Pathologizing Cultural Values/Communication Styles	Dismissing an individual who brings up race/culture in work/school setting	Leave your cultural baggage outside.
Second-Class Citizen	Being ignored at a store counter as attention is given to a White customer behind you	Whites are more valued customers than people of color.
Traditional Gender Role Prejudicing and Stereotyping	When a female student asks a male professor for extra help on a chemistry assignment, he asks, “What do you need to work on this for anyway?”	Women are less capable in math and science.
Sexual Objectification	Students use the term <i>gay</i> to describe a fellow student who is ostracized at school.	People who are weird and different are “gay”.
Assumption of Abnormality	Two men holding hands in public receiving stares from strangers.	You should keep your displays of affection private because they are offensive.
Helplessness*	Someone helps you onto a bus or train, even when you need no help.	You can’t do anything by yourself because you have a disability.
Denial of Personal Identity*	“I can’t believe you are married?”	Your life is not normal or like mine. The only thing I see when I look at you is your disability.

Exoticization	"I've always wanted an Asian girlfriend! They wait hand and foot on their men."	Asian American women are submissive and meant to serve the physical needs of men.
Assumption of One's Own Religion as Normal**	The sole acknowledgment of Christian holidays in work and school.	Your religious holidays need to be celebrated on your own time; they are unimportant.

Adapted from D.W. Sue, Bucceri et al., 2007.

*Themes and examples are taken from Keller & Galgay, 2010.

**Themes and examples are taken from Nadal et al., 2010b.

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