



Racial & ethnic microaggressions on school placements: implications for minority ethnic student teachers

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What's racialised microaggressions?

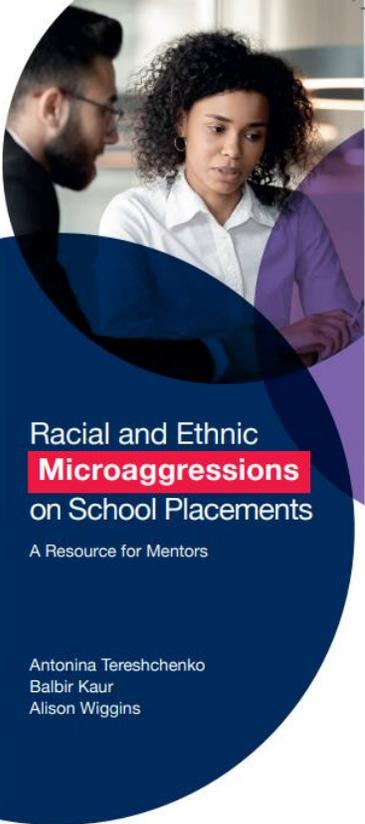
...it is in the successful lawyer mistaken for a waiter at a networking event, the employee on the verge of a breakdown after being consistently overlooked for promotion, or the employee whose emails expressing concerns about his employer's forthcoming slavery exhibition are ignored. It's in loaded silences, throwaway remarks and causal comments.

- Rollock, N. 2022. *The Racial Code*.

Why microaggressions are so tricky?

- Invisibility to the perpetrator
- Can usually be explained away by seemingly nonbiased and valid reasons
- Produce a *vague* feeling of being attacked, or disrespected, or that something is not right (all interpreted through experiential reality)
- Easier to handle an overt and obvious racist incident than microaggressions that are vague and disguised (am I paranoid? how do I prove it?)

Racial and Ethnic Microaggressions on School Placements: A Resource for Mentors - UCL Discovery



Theme: Environmental invalidation

Microaggressions which are more apparent on a system level due to limited representation

Microaggression:
A senior leadership team in school is all White, including in ethnically diverse urban schools

Example experience:
“I think it stunts you, the idea of, ‘I’m going to be a teacher forever.’ You’re not going to be able to progress. It’s like, ‘Do I really just want to be stuck in one place for the rest of my life?’, because you don’t see anyone like you in the leadership team.”

Message this sends to student teacher:
Only White people can succeed and advance in the teaching profession.

Microaggression:
Non-diverse curriculum that student teachers of colour often have to teach

Example experience:
“I would say obviously it’s quite difficult not being able to teach texts that are anything but White authors, the majority is White authors, so that in itself can be quite alienating.”

Message this sends to student teacher:
Leave your cultural knowledge outside of mainstream school.

Recommendations

Raise awareness of the scale and implications of racial microaggressions faced by students on PGCE programmes with PGCE tutors and school-based mentors/lead professional mentors (e.g. through training).

Encourage schools to develop processes that detail how to report, record and deal with racist incidents. These processes should be communicated to the student teacher at the beginning of the placement.

Ensure that all mentors and partnership management members have anti-racism and anti-discrimination development training embedded as part of their role as professional mentors.

Embed anti-racist practice and pedagogy in the PGCE curriculum at the subject and programme level to develop the racial literacy of student teachers.

Add support with dealing with issues of racism to the PGCE student safety and wellbeing agenda.

Develop course and placement evaluation tools to give students the opportunity to share their experiences of racism (even if these were not reported) and use this information in monitoring, assessment and planning.

Sources and resources

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Racial and Ethnic Microaggressions on School Placements
A Resource for Mentors

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PURPOSE

- To increase ability of mentors to identify racial microaggressions in general and in themselves.
- To understand detrimental impact on minority ethnic student teachers.
- To promote open dialogue in schools.

Theme: **Ascription of intelligence**

Assigning a degree of intelligence to a student teacher on the basis of their race

Microaggression:

Teachers and/or students react with surprise that a minority ethnic student teacher is from a Russell group university

Example experience:

“ when they found out that you went to UCL it was like, ‘What? You’re at UCL? Oh my God, how did you get there? What? You went to [university] and you’re still at UCL?’.”

Message this sends to student teacher:

It is unusual for people of your race to succeed.

- What’s this microaggression about
- How it may manifest in schools
- Interview extract
- Message this sends to students

“I suppose maybe they just think I’m young, so I’m inexperienced. [...] I think it’s more to do with maybe race, because generally in schools the majority of the diversity comes from the support staff.” (Black Caribbean, PGCE Psychology)

“The head of department [...] she was calling me Miss Bulgaria. I don’t know why it made me feel very bad but I hated it.” (Bulgarian, PGCE Mathematics)

“I’d sit all by myself, and no one cared.” (Black Caribbean, PGCE Primary)

“In my second placement I was told so many times, ‘You can speak a lot more clearer or posher.’” (Mixed White and Black, PGCE Social Sciences)

“Do I really just want to be stuck in one place for the rest of my life?, because you don’t see anyone like you in the leadership team.” (Indian, PGCE Social Sciences)

Messages to student teachers...

- You are an outsider / You don't belong.
- Ethnic minority people couldn't occupy higher status positions.
- Only White people can advance in the teaching profession.
- Minority ethnic student teachers are less valued.
- Monitor your behaviour and speech to be taken seriously as a teacher.
- Leave your cultural knowledge outside of mainstream school.

Download document to start conversations, and be mindful of...

- Intersectional microaggressions
 - gender, immigrant status, sexual orientation, and disability microaggressions may have further detrimental effects
- Interethnic racial microaggressions occur between people of colour as well (i.e., not just a majority-minority issue)