

Table 2
Examples of Racial Microaggressions in Therapeutic Practice

Theme	Microaggression	Message
<p>Alien in own land When Asian Americans and Latino Americans are assumed to be foreign-born</p>	<p>A White client does not want to work with an Asian American therapist because "she will not understand my problem." A White therapist tells an American-born Latino client that he/she should seek a Spanish-speaking therapist.</p>	<p>You are not American.</p>
<p>Ascription of intelligence Assigning a degree of intelligence to a person of color on the basis of their race</p>	<p>A school counselor reacts with surprise when an Asian American student had trouble on the math portion of a standardized test. A career counselor asking a Black or Latino student, "Do you think you're ready for college?"</p>	<p>All Asians are smart and good at math. It is unusual for people of color to succeed.</p>
<p>Color blindness Statements which indicate that a White person does not want to acknowledge race</p>	<p>A therapist says "I think you are being too paranoid. We should emphasize similarities, not people's differences" when a client of color attempts to discuss her feelings about being the only person of color at her job and feeling alienated and dismissed by her co-workers. A client of color expresses concern in discussing racial issues with her therapist. Her therapist replies with, "When I see you, I don't see color."</p>	<p>Race and culture are not important variables that affect people's lives. Your racial experiences are not valid.</p>
<p>Criminality/assumption of criminal status A person of color is presumed to be dangerous, criminal, or deviant on the basis of their race</p>	<p>When a Black client shares that she was accused of stealing from work, the therapist encourages the client to explore how she might have contributed to her employer's mistrust of her. A therapist takes great care to ask all substance abuse questions in an intake with a Native American client, and is suspicious of the client's nonexistent history with substances.</p>	<p>You are a criminal. You are deviant.</p>
<p>Denial of individual racism A statement made when Whites renounce their racial biases</p>	<p>A client of color asks his or her therapist about how race affects their working relationship. The therapist replies, "Race does not affect the way I treat you." A client of color expresses hesitancy in discussing racial issues with his White female therapist. She replies "I understand. As a woman, I face discrimination also."</p>	<p>Your racial/ethnic experience is not important. Your racial oppression is no different than my gender oppression.</p>
<p>Myth of meritocracy Statements which assert that race does not play a role in succeeding in career advancement or education.</p>	<p>A school counselor tells a Black student that "if you work hard, you can succeed like everyone else." A career counselor is working with a client of color who is concerned about not being promoted at work despite being qualified. The counselor suggests, "Maybe if you work harder you can succeed like your peers."</p>	<p>People of color are lazy and/or incompetent and need to work harder. If you don't succeed, you have only yourself to blame (blaming the victim).</p>
<p>Pathologizing cultural values/communication styles The notion that the values and communication styles of the dominant/White culture are ideal</p>	<p>A Black client is loud, emotional, and confrontational in a counseling session. The therapist diagnoses her with borderline personality disorder. A client of Asian or Native American descent has trouble maintaining eye contact with his therapist. The therapist diagnoses him with a social anxiety disorder. Advising a client, "Do you really think your problem stems from racism?"</p>	<p>Assimilate to dominant culture. Leave your cultural baggage outside.</p>

Table 2 (continued)

Theme	Microaggression	Message
Second-class citizen Occurs when a White person is given preferential treatment as a consumer over a person of color	A counselor limits the amount of long-term therapy to provide at a college counseling center; she chooses all White clients over clients of color. Clients of color are not welcomed or acknowledged by receptionists.	Whites are more valued than people of color. White clients are more valued than clients of color.
Environmental microaggressions Macro-level microaggressions, which are more apparent on a systemic level	A waiting room office has pictures of American presidents. Every counselor at a mental health clinic is White.	You don't belong/Only white people can succeed. You are an outsider/You don't exist.
