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1 **AUTHOR'S PERSONAL PRE-PRINT VERSION OF MANUSCRIPT**

2 **PATRICIA NEVILLE**

3 **'WHEN I SAY . . . EVERYDAY RACISM'**

4 **MEDICAL EDUCATION(2021)**

5 Abstract:

6 In this 'When I say . . . ' article, the concept of everyday racism is defined and explained as a useful
7 theoretical and methodological tool to evidence the numerous ways in which the climate of medical
8 school can adversely impact on the social and educational achievements of ethnic minority students.

9 **When I say . . . everyday racism**

10 There is a growing body of evidence that the social and educational environment of health professional
11 programmes can be challenging for students from ethnic minority backgrounds. Feelings of social
12 isolation, being ignored, or excluded from social and educational activities and feeling 'conspicuous' in a
13 predominantly 'white' space list as some of the leading experiences.^{1,2} These experiences, combined
14 with the high workload and stress commonly associated with pursuing medical studies,³ are offered to
15 explain the observed trend that students from ethnic minority backgrounds underperform at medical
16 school.⁴ This negative educational outcome is not exclusive to healthcare programmes; however,
17 educationalists and scholars alike are keen to explore the socio-cultural factors that contribute to this
18 attainment gap in the ethnic minority student experience.

19 There is increased recognition of the role that a sense of belonging can play in motivating and inspiring
20 educational success for all students, but especially students from ethnic minority backgrounds.⁵ One
21 theoretical framework that can help interpret the dynamics of 'belonging/not belonging' for students
22 from ethnic minority backgrounds is everyday racism. Everyday racism is a form of racism that operates
23 at the micro-level of society 'reproduced through routine and taken-for-granted practices and
24 procedures in everyday life'.⁶ Everyday racism is distilled from and sustained by wider structural

25 processes of racism.⁶ Some may dismiss everyday racism as a less significant form of racism because it
26 occurs at the inter-personal level. However, it is the very fact that this form of racism is continually and
27 repeated expressed in our interactions with others that makes it harmful.⁶ Everyday racism allows for
28 racist ideas, words and behaviours to openly be expressed (i.e. not hidden),⁷ through the apparently
29 'innocuous' forms of 'jokes, storytelling, generalisations or even so-called compliments' (p. 184).⁷ An
30 example of everyday racism is racial microaggressions. Racial microaggressions are 'brief and
31 commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or
32 unintentional that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target
33 person or group' (p. 273).⁸ This form of racism is harmful for two reasons: first, because it is intertwined
34 with everyday interactions and practices, it has the effect of being '(F)elt persistently'⁶ yet in a manner
35 that is 'often difficult to pinpoint and can be therefore hard to counter'⁶; and second, these practices
36 work to obscure or deny the personal achievements, hard work and battle over obstacles that people
37 from ethnic minorities have and continue to encounter in order to 'be here'(p.207).⁹

38 Eseed^{6,9} offers us a helpful taxonomy for illuminating instances of everyday racism. Many of these
39 examples appear benign to a white audience, nevertheless that are instruments of othering, making the
40 target of these comments feel different and unwelcome. Racial microaggressions cover a range of notes,
41 from subtle snubs (e.g. "How did you get this job?") (a microinsult) to a dismissal of one's abilities, (e.g.
42 "You speak good English")(a microinvalidation), to an explicit verbal attack with the explicit intent of
43 hurting the intended victim (e.g. being referred to as "The coloured person in the room" (a
44 microassault)(p. 274).⁸ The multiple registers of racial microaggressions adds to the adverse climate
45 that ethnic minority students' study under. Other examples of how everyday racism manifests itself
46 include, but are not limited to: patronizing interactions or when people talk down to others, an
47 assumption that students from ethnic minority backgrounds lack confidence, pressure to assimilate/play
48 down ethnic difference, feeling like attention is always drawn to one's cultural/ethnic difference, an

49 underestimation of the ability of students or the fear of failing/not being exemplary in your work, a fear
50 of being labelled as problematic for speaking out on diversity issues, generalization- akin to
51 stereotyping, and exclusion or contact avoidance, when people don't want to join you in activities.^{6,9}
52 Unfortunately, the scale of everyday racism experienced by students and staff at universities has been
53 widely recorded. The UK's Equality and Human Rights Commission reported that 13% of all higher
54 education students in UK had experienced some form of racial harassment (24% of students from ethnic
55 minority background, and 9% of white students). While 20% of students experienced physical
56 harassment, 56% experienced name-calling, racist insults and jokes, microaggressions, being ignored or
57 excluded from activities.¹⁰ In most instances, the perpetrators were students; however, academic staff
58 were also noted as being the sources of the harassment. Staff members were not immune to everyday
59 racism. Over 50% of staff who participated in the study had been excluded or ignored from events, and
60 more than 25% had been called names, being subjected to jokes and insults.¹⁰ In the US, Black, Asian,
61 Latino/a and Native American faculty reported racial discrimination in the workplace and counted it as a
62 significant work-related stress.¹¹

63 What can be done to combat the everyday racism experienced by ethnic minority students and staff in
64 medical school? First, there needs to be more widespread recognition of the existence of everyday
65 racism, its characteristic features and the pernicious impact it has on student/staff well-being. This
66 recognition counts as an individual and institutional responsibility. Including content on everyday racism
67 as part of the undergraduate curriculum is a good starting point from which to build individual
68 awareness of how our ethnicity and perceptions of ethnicity shapes personal and professional
69 interactions. Mandatory training on unconscious bias training, bystander effect and cultural competence
70 should be offered to both students and faculty. These initiatives are helpful in facilitating critical self-
71 reflection and are a major step towards challenging the social norms and climate of higher education to

72 make it more welcoming. Nevertheless, such tactics need to be part of a wider, sustainable action plan if
73 an institution can consider itself to be anti-racist.

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