

**Understanding Race, Mental Health,  
and Wellbeing: A Progressive Study  
of Experienced Racial Othering  
in Institutional Spaces**



Examination Number: B091035  
Word Count: 7999  
MSc Psychological Research  
The University of Edinburgh  
2017

## **Acknowledgments**

To my supervisor Dr. Billy Lee, for his guidance, support and encouragement;

To the study participants, for their honesty, contribution, and willingness;

To those who generously assisted with participant recruitment;

To the people in my life who offer unconditional love;

Thank you.

And to all my people of colour fighting the good fight, publically or privately,

This one is for you.

## **Abstract**

This study explores the interaction between experienced racial microaggressions and othering, racial identity, and mental health in two populations from two cultures. Three male students of colour from UK universities and three from US universities were interviewed. Interviews were conducted, transcribed, and analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) methodology. Three master themes emerged from the UK group, including 1) Racialised Othering, 2) Microaggressions as a Normalised and Invisibilised Experience, and 3) Fluctuating Race Narratives. Four master themes were extracted from the US group, including 1) Dehumanisation, 2) Mental Stress and Fatigue, 3) Struggling to Find my Place, and 4) Gracious in an Unfair World. Overarching themes from both groups included Inescapable Racialised Existence and Cycling Racial 'Pre-Trauma.' These findings offer deep insight into the differing racial environments of the US and UK, as well as the relationship between mental wellbeing and racialised experiences for young men of colour. This study also reflects on the current literature and the gaps in research that must be addressed in order to support the psychological wellbeing of people of colour.

Keywords: Racial othering; racial microaggressions; mental health; cross-cultural; pre-trauma

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## **Introduction**

### ***Literature Review***

There is considerable scholarship across several academic fields exploring race-related experiences (Helms et al., 2010). The majority of literature reflects the racial landscape of the United States. Traditionally, the study of race-related issues has stemmed from a sociological focus on racism such as Critical Race Theory and the perspective of the oppressor rather than the oppressed (Harrell, 2000).

Less overt forms of racism were first defined in the 1970s when Dr. Chester Pierce, an African American psychiatrist and scholar, coined the term ‘microaggression’ and theorised the concept in relation to the daily experiences of African Americans as “automatic, subtle, stunning, seemingly innocuous messages, often non-verbal, which devalue the blacks; e.g. a black man and a white man enter an elevator whereupon the single white female passenger clutches her handbag as she moves as close as possible to the white man” (Pérez Huber & Solorzano, 2015b). The concept of racial othering has been defined as practices that “serve to reinforce and reproduce positions of domination and subordination” in relation to race (Johnson et al., 2004).

While a growing body of work on racism has started to cultivate, psychological literature has yet to adequately address the multifaceted effects of these experiences on a person’s mental health. Racism has been reviewed as a potential catalyst or aggravation of trauma disorders, but a focus on race-related stress or trauma has not been a priority (Helms et al., 2010).

However researchers such as Derald Wing Sue have made strides in defining subtypes of the microaggression phenomenon in relation to different racial groups as well as understanding how “race talk” manifests in American society (Sue, 2013). Research on specific microaggressions has also been conducted, such as visualised microaggressions which “reinforce institutional racism and perpetuate ideologies of white supremacy” (Pérez Huber & Solorzano, 2015a).

There have also been qualitative studies focusing on work, campus, healthcare, and counselling spaces. These studies have been useful to decipher themes associated with different spaces and reactions to such incidents (Hunn et al., 2015). Additionally, research

on experiences unique to specific groups such as African American women have illuminated demographic differences in regards to experienced othering (Robinson-Wood et al., 2015).

Quantitative research has emerged from the foundation of qualitative studies, although it remains minimal and almost exclusively conducted with populations in the United States. Fairly recent development of measurement tools such as the Race and Ethnic Microaggressions Scale (REMS) has also allowed this area of quantitative research to expand, although further utilisation and validation of these assessments is needed (Nadal, 2011).

### ***Present Study & Methodology***

Despite recent focus on the topic of discreet racism, there are many aspects of this phenomenon that remain unaddressed. Research exploring cultural differences between groups is nearly nonexistent. Focus on the mental health consequences of such experiences is also lacking. This study addresses those gaps through a qualitative approach to understanding the lived experiences of racial minorities in the United States and the United Kingdom. By recruiting participants from the university, an institutional space, this study approaches race-related experiences through a systematic lens.

### ***Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis***

This study was conducted using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) methodology. IPA is a qualitative research method that is idiographic in nature and aims to explore how people make sense of a personally experienced phenomenon. This approach views the participants as experts of their own experiences and focuses on the detailed examination of a small sample. The process includes reflexive journaling to track researcher subjectivity and bracket potential bias. The “de-centering of subjectivity” allows researchers to approach transcripts with clarity, which is crucial to successful IPA analysis (Lee & Prior, 2013). IPA, as opposed to other qualitative methods, was best suited for this topic because it accounts for participant identities and lived experiences, not just discourse.

### ***Participants***

Six participants were recruited in total, three from UK universities and three from US universities. In IPA research, three to six interviews are recommended to ensure a detailed analysis while having enough data to extract themes (Lee & Prior, 2013). The participant criteria for both groups included the following:

- Male
- Aged 18-22
- Self identifies as a racial minority/person of colour

The first six participants who volunteered and fit the criteria were selected. The participants aged from 19-22 and represented two racial groups, Black and South Asian. All participants were undergraduate students in university who grew up as racial minorities in their respective country. The participants came from five universities.

Participant recruitment for American students was done through race-related organisations in Los Angeles, Portland, and Atlanta. Recruitment for UK students was done at the University of Edinburgh, King's College London, and Edinburgh Napier University through campus flyers and announcements through student organisations.

### *Procedure*

Interviews with UK participants were conducted on the University of Edinburgh campus and were recorded using audio equipment from the university. Interviews with US participants were conducted through secure video calling and were audio recorded on a secure computer device. Interviews were conducted between February 2017- June 2017.

Interviews lasted 50 minutes on average. Each interview began with a consent process and a review of the Participant Information Sheet. The participants were asked about the following areas: 1) Perceptions of Identity, 2) Race-Related Experiences, and 3) Mental Health and Wellbeing (Appendix 6). In the 'Race-Related Experiences' section, participants were asked to reflect on example microaggressions drawn from previous research (Appendix 7). These examples were physically laid out in front of participants (UK group) or available for participants to view on a computer (US group).

The interviews were then transcribed and all identifying information was removed. Preliminary analysis was then conducted using left and right hand margin codes to

organise the object and experiential claims (Lee & Prior 2013). These claims were then organised into subthemes and ‘theme labels.’ Master theme tables were then created for each participant (Appendix 8). Two separate master theme tables for the UK group and US group were then created (Table 1, Table 2). The master theme tables reflect only the themes that were present in all the participants in their respective group. Overlapping themes across groups were then extracted and incorporated into the discussion of this study.

### *Ethics*

This study was approved by the University of Edinburgh’s Psychology Research Ethics Committee. All participants received the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix 3/4) and completed the Consent Form (Appendix 2). Each interview was followed up with a short debriefing.

### *Statement of Reflexivity*

As mentioned earlier, an essential component of IPA is the researcher’s openness and self-awareness in relation to the interviewee. As a woman of colour, I recognised at the beginning of this study that I have a specific perspective on race-related issues. I come from an activist background in the United States, so my tolerance for oppression and minority marginalisation is low. In preparation for this study, I took extra effort to identify and then bracket my ideas on race in order to create an interviewing atmosphere that allowed participants to narrate their lived experiences free from outside influence. I am confident I successfully bracketed those feelings during the interviews and analysis period. I worked closely with my supervisor to ensure the work was a reflection of the participants’ lived experiences and not my personal perspective.

The participant/interviewer dynamic varied due to a number of potential factors. Half the participants had open body language and revealed that speaking about this topic was therapeutic. The other half were more closed off and seemed hesitant speaking about these issues. These differences were across both groups. Being a woman interviewing men, it is possible that allowed some participants to feel more comfortable and some to feel more withdrawn. The dynamic of the interviewer and participant both being people of colour overall seemed to facilitate open responses. In the post-interview debrief, four

participants verbalised that they were only comfortable speaking about racism because they were speaking to another person of colour.

This study overall allowed me to realise the complexity of lived experiences in relation to 'the race-related.' I have thoroughly appreciated this opportunity not only to conduct novel research, but also to give voice to experiences that are traditionally erased.

## Results

### Group One (UK)

Table 1: UK Master Theme Table

Theme	Subtheme
Racialised Othering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Not Belonging</li><li>• Automatically Labeled and Viewed as a Threat</li></ul>
Microaggressions as a Normalised and Invisibilised Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Desensitisation</li><li>• Entwined in Everyday Moments</li><li>• The “Rinse and Repeat”</li></ul>
Fluctuating Race Narratives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ambiguity around what is ‘Race Related’</li><li>• Reconciling Lived Experience with Cultural-Sanctioned Narratives</li></ul>

#### Theme One: Racialised Othering

*“So I see that as what people think of race; not really fitting in here.” (Adam)*

One of the themes extracted from the UK interviews was experienced othering as a racial minority. At the core of this theme were two experiences: being viewed as inherently not belonging in society, and being immediately associated with threat.

#### *Not Belonging*

Participants narrated experienced othering from the White majority as well as internal suffering from existing in an environment that asserts they do not belong:

*“Uh, when they ask you where you’re from and I’ll say I’m from Scotland, they’ll say ‘yeah well you have the accent. But you don’t really look Scottish.’ And I’m like well what is a Scottish person supposed to look like, you know?” (Adam)*

*“We want to be- we are people of this country as well, we belong here, but we’re not. We don’t get that chance to say that at the end of the day.” (Adam)*

Adam's experience of not "*looking Scottish*" reflects the struggle of being viewed as inherently foreign and not truly belonging. The parallel relationship between Whiteness and belongingness in the UK society is exemplified through the participants' experienced racial othering. These participants were all born and raised in the UK, and as much as they feel they are "*people of this country,*" they do not "*get that chance*" to determine what is 'home.' This rejection creates internal turmoil that prompts the question "*what do I do now?*" and "*builds up*" as a painful internal struggle that is "*something that you can't really describe*" (Humzah). This subtheme embodies the experience of being a Racial Other, a person always alien in society's eyes because of external differences.

### ***Automatically Labeled and Viewed as a Threat***

'Being Brown' for all the male participants meant being instantly associated with violence, fear, and harm:

*"Um, I guess the first thing is when people think of Pakistanis they think of Muslims surely. Um the first thing that comes to mind about Muslims is terrorism."* (Humzah)

*"Um, "people looking uncomfortable or afraid when they see- see you" (referring to microaggression card). That's hundred percent, I've had that happen so many times. Definitely, definitely... I see that a lot, whenever I go on the tube people do look at you, or on the train no one sits next to you."* (Adam)

In the first example, a sequence of association is clearly laid out, 1) Pakistani, 2) Muslim, 3) Terrorist. Humzah's experience of automatic association with violence is based purely on skin colour. Not only is Brownness something "*most people relate to Muslims,*" but it's also linked to terrorism as "*one in the same*" (Humzah). This is the same experience Adam has on the tube and train when people look at him "*uncomfortable or afraid*" or when "*no one sits next to*" him. He describes this with "*hundred percent*" certainty in the reality of what he has experienced "*so many times.*" The assumption of dangerousness is automatic, mechanical, and based on the physical aspect of Being Brown. "*Anyone who looks remotely South Asian*" is effortlessly associated with threat (Kevin). The mere presence of a Brown male body prompts rejection or even physical separation. It's a stark and robotic reaction based on the "*opinion in their head*" that a Brown man is "*instantly somebody who's going to harm them*" (Humzah).

## **Theme Two: Microaggressions as a Normalised and Invisiblised Experience**

*“It’s almost like you’ve heard it so many times that your- your reaction is just kind of like  
‘that’s quite predictable’” (Kevin)*

The UK participants’ experiences with microaggressions were consistently normalised or, at times, invisiblised. This was a significant theme in all three interviews.

### ***Desensitisation***

The participants consistently expressed a desensitised attitude towards these incessant microaggressive experiences:

*“So I’m actually very immune to this microaggression business now, I’m so immune to it.” (Adam)*

*“...Because it’s happened so much, and so often, you just, kind of, I can’t remember the word for it but you just kind of ‘blank it out’ you put it to the side, so don’t really- you become numb to it, you become numb to the feeling.” (Humzah)*

Adam’s awareness of how he is “so immune” to “this microaggression business” not only reflects how ordinary his encounters with microaggressions are, but also a deep sense of detachment towards this unrelenting reality. Humzah’s experience of “[becoming] numb to the feeling” after it has “happened so much and so often” also mirrors Adam’s reaction. After living a lifetime dealing with microaggressions, this exposure has made the participants desensitised and reliant on “[blanking] it out” and “[putting] it to the side.” It’s not just about being desensitised to how consistent microaggressions are, but also to “the feeling” the experience triggers (Humzah). In this way, the participants’ desensitised reaction is a form of protection, a way of surviving as a racial minority in a society that microaggressively responds to their existence.

### ***Entwined in Everyday Moments***

Having microaggressions surface in benign, typical situations also emerged as a notable way in which incidents of racism are normalised systematically:

*“That’s microaggressions. When you’re trying to, you know, for example if you sit next to somebody, somebody turns their back against you for the whole journey or something like that, that’s microaggression.”* (Adam)

*“Um, but it’s also, it was also a kind of reminder that- that attitude continues to exist.”* (Kevin)

Even on an ordinary bus ride, Adam is othered by the person sitting next to him. The invisibilisation of microaggressions is showcased in this example, because unless it is personally experienced, such incidents are not necessarily understood or validated by others. When Kevin was given a “reminder” of racism when insulted at a Halloween party or when Humzah gets “looks” like he is “going to do something” while listening to music and walking home, it exemplifies how these men live a life that is saturated with microaggressions. They don’t have to do anything politically charged to experience racial othering. Simply existing in a world where racial identity is inherently politicised is enough to lead to such daily experiences. It is a “predictable” burden woven into the participants’ expectations of how life unfolds (Kevin).

### ***The “Rinse and Repeat”***

When confronted with microaggressions and being othered, UK participants felt a need to be strong, move on, and let it go:

*“...It’s something that uh gradually after experiencing so many of these things it built me up to kind of do this rinse and repeat action where I uh looked at all these things and got myself to a better place...”* (Humzah)

*“It’s hard but I’m fine. I have thick skin. I don’t show emotion.”* (Adam)

This “rinse and repeat” of being strong, letting go, and forgetting what happened illustrates the way the participants feel they are permitted to deal with these microaggressive experiences. After “experiencing so many of these things,” Humzah fleshes out how this unceasing cycle “built [him] up” to deal with these experiences by telling himself to be strong and not allowing it to affect him. Even though Adam admits “it’s hard” to deal with, he immediately follows it with an assurance that he’s “fine,” has “thick skin” and doesn’t “show emotion.” This need to ‘be fine’ is a significant part of

the “*rinse and repeat*,” which, in essence, is a cycle of stress without any authentic processing of these incidents. It is a way of coping that reflects the invisibility and the normalcy of microaggressions.

### **Theme Three: Fluctuating Race Narratives**

“... *I used to think it was very multicultural until I realized that it's not multicultural*”

(Adam)

The way in which the UK participants experienced and understood race, racism, and their place in that discussion was characterised by uncertainty and vagueness.

#### ***Ambiguity around the ‘Race Related’***

An ambiguous approach to defining ‘Race Related’ concepts was evident in the participants’ narrations:

“*Um, and I’m quite- I’m quite uncertain as to whether you can expl- like- you can explicitly say that, um, like ethnic minorities are, um, oppressed or like in what way they are oppressed... it’s difficult for me to sort of understand that relationship so I was hoping that this would help with it.*” (Kevin)

Kevin shows a great deal of hesitation and “[*difficulty*]” around identifying oppression and also questions whether he “*can*” name or define oppression when he sees it. It is as if Kevin is looking for permission to be allowed to point out oppression that minorities, such as himself, face. He inherently has the right to speak about and identify oppression related to his racial and ethnic identity, and yet he is “*uncertain*” about his right to assert these truths. There is also confusion around defining racial identity, as shown when Kevin uses the term “*ethnic minorities*” when speaking about racial minorities. Adam and Humzah also name their ethnic identities in response to questions about racial identity. Whether it is racial identity or racial oppression, participants interacted with the ‘Race Related’ realm tentatively and ambiguously.

#### ***Reconciling Lived Experience with Cultural-Sanctioned Narratives***

Participants also struggled with reconciling their own racial experiences with the societal narrative that racism is nonexistent and therefore does not need to be addressed:

*“...There IS a racism problem because we experienced it firsthand and we didn’t think it was something that was happening in Scotland, but it- it definitely is.” (Humzah)*

*“And there’s an overwhelming amount of um, non-minorities I guess you can call it, in Edinburgh, so people don’t really take notice of it. And when it does happen people tend to just brush it to the side.” (Humzah)*

Humzah’s insistence that there *“IS a racism problem”* after experiencing it *“firsthand,”* even though it wasn’t something commonly accepted as *“happening in Scotland,”* highlights the inconsistencies between the participants’ daily reality and the narrative of a racism-free society. This disregard from *“non-minorities”* who *“don’t really take notice of it”* is an example of White privilege; because it’s not a reality they experience, it’s a reality they have the luxury of *“[brushing] to the side.”* Kevin’s daily experiences of racial othering were *“quite massively overlooked”* as well, despite an awareness of it personally *“happening to [him].”* The participants’ realisation that racism in the UK is *“not just something that’s been happening recently,”* but rather something that has *“been around for years and years”* and *“stills goes on,”* reflects an understanding of this discord (Humzah).

## Group Two (US)

Table 2: US Master Theme Table

Theme	Subtheme
Dehumanisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Being Reduced to Race</li><li>• Perpetually Grappling with Stereotypes</li><li>• Inferiority Complexity</li></ul>
Mental Health and Fatigue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Social and Interpersonal Stress</li><li>• The Emotional Toll</li><li>• Burden of “Staying Okay”</li></ul>
Struggling to Find my Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• (Not) Fitting in White America</li><li>• Seeking Acceptance</li></ul>
Gracious in an Unfair World	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Leniency: Giving the Benefit of the Doubt</li><li>• Realism towards “Race Ingrainment” in Society</li></ul>

### Theme One: Dehumanisation

*“But really it’s just slavery in a different form” (Omar)*

The first major theme extracted from the US group was experienced dehumanisation through devaluation, pigeonholing, and racial degradation.

#### ***Being Reduced to Race***

The US participants narrated a consistent experience of being reduced to a racial label. Instead of being perceived as a multifaceted human, they are viewed as a race and a race only:

*“Just because I’m Black. She doesn’t know who I am, or my name. But she pretty much tells me to fuck off just because of how I look.” (Andres)*

*“...One person they’ve come into contact with or something like that somehow reflects an entire race or culture or religion that they’re talking about.” (Zachariyah)*

Andres recalls an experience of walking to the bus when an older White woman suddenly says to him *“fuck you, you damn n\*\*\*\*er.”* This attack stands out to Andres not because of the racial slur, but the reason it happened. It was not because there was an exchange of words or history with Andres. It was *“just because”* Andres is Black. She didn’t need to know who he was or anything about him; Andres’ Blackness alone was enough to prompt this response. Zachariyah’s reflection on White women who refuse to date men of colour also exemplifies how *“one person”* of colour *“somehow reflects an entire race.”* The idea that race is the only thing such White women see when they consider him romantically is another manifestation of the ‘reduced to race’ theme.

### ***Perpetually Grappling with Stereotypes***

The US participants also faced dehumanising stereotypes that they found themselves grappling with consistently:

*“Um, because they have, like, they view us as, like, I guess you can say savages.” (Omar)*

*“They upon- seem to go in with a very, uh, stereotypical viewpoint that I’m ignorant, I’m a tomfoolery kind of person. Very, very, uh, media-oriented when it comes to what it means to be a Black person or African American.” (Andres)*

Omar’s experience of being viewed as a *“savage”* is a blatant example of how Blackness is demonised to the point of subhuman stereotyping. It is the type of label that inspires *“brutality”* like *“White cops shooting unarmed Black men”* and *“murdering them.”* Andres’ experience with being viewed by others as *“ignorant”* or another *“media-oriented”* and *“stereotypical”* label mirrors Omar’s experience with being instantaneously perceived in a way that is negatively race-related. The participants grapple with the automatic nature of this stereotyping as well as the heaviness of these labels. These are not small assumptions made about their existence, but rather a type branding that has profound consequences, like being targeted because people *“associate terrorism”* with Brownness (Zachariyah). It is a reality these men grapple with on a daily basis.

### ***Inferiority Complexity***

The final way US participants' experienced dehumanisation was being viewed as inferior. They also struggled with not internalising that devaluation:

*"And- and when they all found out I had played double the time they had and I have twice the skill that they have, they were all in shock. Like it was something unheard of, that someone who looks like me could even be capable of having this much of education in a world dominated by White people."* (Andres)

*And then, like, I don't know, kind of looking down on us. Like we're not equal."*  
(Zachariyah)

In his first music class at university, Andres experienced this assumption of inferiority when his White classmates were *"in shock"* to find *"someone who looks like me could even be capable"* of having extensive skills. There was an automatic assumption that he would be less skilled than them, which reflects how *"in a world dominated by White people,"* people of colour are viewed as 'less than' on sight. There is a struggle to prevent this inferiority from being internalised and becoming a true inferiority complex. Andres admits to how *"shitty"* it made him feel, but also maintains what they think *"isn't important."* Being perceived as *"not equal"* is a common experience for the participants, and one they struggle to prevent becoming an internalised belief (Zachariyah).

### **Theme Two: Mental Stress and Fatigue**

*But me living this daily, you know, I can't avoid it. It's- it's not something I can run away from. Or hide from. It's going to be there forever and ever."* (Andres)

For all US participants, racial othering and microaggressions resulted in noteworthy emotional distress and exhaustion.

#### ***Social and Interpersonal Stress***

Negative race-related experiences created a significant amount of stress when it came to navigating relationships, social situations, or friendships:

*"At the same time it's, like, it's kind of scary, 'cause even if you address something what if you're risking, like, your relationship with the person?"* (Zachariyah)

*“You know, ‘you’re pretty cute for a Black guy’ is an insult to me as a Black person. But to my personality it was like ‘oh she thinks I’m cute, that’s awesome, the girl I like thinks I’m cute.’” (Andres)*

As Zachariah describes, addressing microaggressions coming from people he knows is a “scary” situation because of the potential of “risking” the relationship. The fear that bringing up experienced microaggressions would change or influence relationships puts Zachariah in the difficult place of either standing up against being racially othered or preserving his relationships. Andres also faced this stressful dilemma when the girl he was romantically interested in fetishised him and said he was “*pretty cute for a Black guy.*” Although he recognised this type of objectifying microaggression as “*an insult to me as a Black person,*” he was also torn and “*confused*” because the girl he liked found him attractive. It put him in a precarious position and was one of many times he felt like the “*token Black kid.*” This type of social and interpersonal tension is one of the main ways the US participants experienced emotional exhaustion and stress.

### ***The Emotional Toll***

The pain and distress of experiencing continuous racial othering took an emotional toll on all the participants:

*“And that hurt me really... I... that hurt me really badly...I’ve never felt that type of pain before that, before then.” (Omar)*

*“And with-with- with words like that, it can strip you. It can- it can break you down, and- and make you be something you don’t want to be.” (Andres)*

Omar’s exposure to a video of a White police officer killing an unarmed Black man went beyond just pain that hurt him “*really badly;*” he literally had “*never felt that type of pain before,*” which is an enormous statement to make. This pain does not exist in a vacuum for these men. It reflects the reality that blatant racism or violence “*could very well, very possibly happen*” to them too (Omar). It’s a brutal reality check, and has clear emotional consequences. As Andres describes, even just words can “*strip you*” and “*break you down.*” Racial othering has the power to “*make you be something you don’t want to be,*” which can fuel struggles around identity or self-hate that can be “*ingrained*”

into the “*subconscious*” (Omar). Dealing with marginalisation that is designed to “*break you down*” takes a definite toll on these men.

### ***Burden of “Staying Okay”***

The US participants held a self-imposed obligation of ‘staying strong’ and ‘staying okay’ in the face of microaggressive or overt racism, regardless of the mental pressure it created:

*“And I- I realized that I have to be mentally strong in order to push past it...”* (Andres)

*“Any of these encounters, they’re kind of a reminder why I have to be strong.”*  
(Zachariyah)

Both Andres and Zachariyah speak about ‘being strong’ in a specific way. They view being mentally strong as something they “*have to be,*” something that isn’t an option but rather the only way to react to these experiences. The focus is not on processing the racial othering, an approach that requires vulnerability. Instead, the men “*push past it*” or even “*brush it off,*” a concept Zachariyah describes as a “*coping mechanism*” while “*fighting an uphill battle.*” There is a pressure to ‘stay strong’ that the participants deal with on top of the actual experienced racism. Although this thinking is self-imposed, the men admit to it “*definitely*” being a burden that is “*unfair*” (Andres) which causes them to “*question*” themselves a lot (Zachariyah). It is a particularly taxing way in which the men experience mental stress and fatigue as racial minorities.

### **Theme Three: Struggling to Find my Place**

*“...People will distance themselves from you.”* (Zachariyah)

As people of colour, the participants struggled with finding their place in society, not fitting in their environments, and finding genuine acceptance from others:

### ***(Not) Fitting in White America***

The US group found it particularly difficult to fit in and feel at home amongst the White majority in the country:

*“Um, growing up I was around a bunch of White people. So it’s definitely- definitely hard trying to be true to myself.” (Andres)*

*“...It’s like, you want to integrate, but if you still have, like, all these interactions that eventually make you think of, like, ‘us versus them,’ there’s always going to be some sort of boundary.” (Zachariyah)*

Zachariyah describes the struggle to “*want to integrate*” and fit in, only to encounter “*interactions*” that serve as a reminder of “*us versus them.*” This experience lays out the sequence of 1) trying to be accepted, 2) being othered instead, and 3) realising that there will always be a “*boundary*” in the form of racism. It’s a cycle of trying to fit in and then being rejected by the White majority. Andres speaks on this difficulty and how it became particularly hard “*trying to be true*” to himself growing up around White people. This illustrates the participants’ dilemma of either being true to their identity or “[*hiding*] themselves” and becoming “*totally different*” people “*just to fit in.*” The men in this group are “*fighting*” to “*create a place for themselves in society,*” but experiencing microaggressions only reminds them of their marginalisation in White America (Andres).

### ***Seeking Acceptance***

The second part of this struggle included seeking and yearning to be accepted amidst the challenges accompanied with being a racial minority:

*“So somewhere along the line I realized that I guess you’re more likable if you don’t take these things- that’s kind of messed up, but yeah (laughs slightly) if you don’t take these things to heart.” (Zachariyah)*

*“When, you know, at the MSA (Muslim Student Association) at my school, when I walk in and no one will really speak to me...” (Omar)*

In reflecting on his tendency to avoid confronting friends who have made microaggressive or overt insults, Zachariyah describes despite how “*messed up*” it is, “*you’re more likable*” when you “*don’t take these things to heart.*” This likability factor was a serious consideration for the participants. When the men had to choose to either stand up against microaggressions or be likable and accepted by others, the desire to be accepted was often more important. Even in situations when the men recognised they

were being treated badly, this yearning for acceptance manifested. Omar's experience with being ignored at the MSA in his university illustrates this very well. He saw how ironic it was that he was being racially othered within another minority group, but he still wanted to be accepted. The need for outside acceptance reflects the US group's struggle to find a genuine place of belonging.

#### **Theme Four: Gracious in an Unfair World**

*"We all knew that she means well."* (Omar)

Despite being racialised and othered, the US participants all approached this reality with profound graciousness and mercy.

##### ***Leniency: Giving the Benefit of the Doubt***

When considering the perpetrators of microaggressive behaviour or racial othering, all the participants exhibited leniency towards the aggressor:

*"She realised what she did. 'Cause she's- she's- she's a good person, I like her."* (Omar)

*"Um it just makes me- makes me assume that they're ignorant and they don't really know any better."* (Zachariyah)

Despite experiencing a microaggression from his professor, Omar calls her as "*good person*" and gives her the benefit of the doubt by not equating that action with her character. There is a necessary level of lenience needed for someone to look beyond a prejudiced act and consider a person still to be "*good*." Even Zachariyah's assumption that "*they don't really know any better*" requires him to look at this ignorance with a degree of forgiveness as opposed to severity. Although they are at the receiving end of racism, the participants have chosen a compassionate approach. There is also a sense of hope in this perspective that people can change and could possibly "*come to understand what you are going through*" one day (Zachariyah).

##### ***Realism towards "Race Ingrainment" in Society***

This graciousness is also demonstrated through the participants' understanding of how ingrained racial othering is in society:

*“And it shows how they are like- conditioned by society to think like this, kind of uh how deep microaggressions are, like, everyday things and they are okay.” (Zachariyah)*

*“And you- you have to be prepared for someone to be, to say that’s- that’s not- your feelings are not legitimate, or anything like that.” (Omar)*

Expanding on his reason to give people the benefit of the doubt, Zachariyah explains how they are *“conditioned by society to think like this”* and recognises *“how deep microaggressions are”* in the *“everyday things”* to the point where they are considered *“okay.”* This graciousness is not coming from a place of naivety regarding race relations in the US, but rather realism that people may be *“conditioned”* to contribute to a microaggressive racial culture. The men recognise they *“live this every single day”* (Andres). They also realise they must be prepared to be told their feelings *“are not legitimate”* (Omar). Despite this injustice, they choose to be gracious and free from resentment.

## **Discussion**

### ***A Culture of Silence***

Before delving into the discussion of the study findings, a reflection on certain aspects of the study development and recruitment is warranted. While the research focus of this study remained the same from start to finish, the initial intention was to have one participant group with individuals incarcerated in the Scottish Prison Service in order to investigate racial othering with a more vulnerable institutional population. However when it came time to recruiting participants, not a single person was willing to participate. Even with the study changes and the decision to recruit US and UK university students, recruitment was extremely difficult. As soon as potential participants were briefed on the subject matter of the interviews, the majority immediately withdrew their interest. These difficulties are very significant in terms of how societal pressures impact race-related research with men of colour. In general, there is a global culture of silence that prevents men from feeling it's acceptable to express and discuss their emotions. This culture is developed from the patriarchal notion that this type of vulnerability is equivalent to weakness, inherently feminine, and therefore negative (Addis & Mahalik, 2003). The manifestation of toxic masculinity thrives in communities of colour especially, and has been investigated by researchers (Vogel et al., 2011). Themes related to this culture of silence emerged from the UK and US groups, which will be discussed further in this section. This is a well-documented issue so it is not surprising that recruitment was difficult, but it is an unfortunate factor that deserves attention in regards to the study process of this research.

### ***UK Group Findings and Discussion***

The major themes in the UK group reflect a continuous struggle with being racially othered, how to make sense of this experience, and how this reflects the racial climate in the UK. All three participants were South Asian, which offers significant insight into the lived reality of young Brown men in the UK.

### ***Perpetually Foreign, Perpetually a Menace***

The themes from the UK group illuminate a bleak cultural and structural classification of Male Brownness. This categorisation is established through the association of threat with

Brown men, which allows for Brownness to be criminalised. It is also solidified through the automatic defining of Brown bodies as foreign, making it impossible to ever truly belong in the UK. These findings are consistent with themes Alien in Own Land and Assumption of Criminal Status described in previous research (Sue et al, 2007). All three of the participants were born and raised in the UK, yet this has not effect on the way danger and rejection is inherently attached to their identities. These experiences reflect how the dehumanisation of Brown men in the UK is tied to Islamophobic and anti-Muslim rhetoric, regardless if they are actually Muslim or not. This supports previous research with South Asian students in Canada (Poolokasingham et al., 2014). The described interchangeability between Brown, Muslim, and Terrorist illustrates a disturbing reality that being a Brown man means you are guilty on sight in the eyes of society, and will face the consequences of societal sentencing on a daily basis.

#### *Disconnect, Confusion and Ambiguity: Consequences of Invisiblising Race in the UK*

One of the struggles unique to the UK group, that is absent from the current literature, is the difficulties attached to the way the 'race-related' is swept under the rug in UK society. This invisibilisation of racial othering and racism, as well as the lack of established academic and community focus on race, has concrete consequences for participants. The men struggle to find the language and terminology to describe their experiences simply because it is not an ingrained part of social or academic discourse. They also struggle with reconciling their lived experience of being othered with the societal narrative of a colour-blind society. This denial of acknowledging race means the denial of acknowledging the oppression racial beings endure. It is a theme documented in previous research, and is one of the reasons the men find it difficult to see their experiences as legitimate (Sue et al., 2007). What is striking is how the UK racial climate asserts itself to be colour-blind, and yet simultaneously maintains a structure that supports the dehumanisation, criminalisation, and othering revealed in this study.

#### *A Global Structure*

The findings from the UK group confirm a very important truth. The reality of racial othering and microaggressive marginalisation that has been documented through research in the United States and Canada primarily is just as alive and active in the UK. As one of the first investigations of this phenomenon in the UK, it is significant that themes

established as characteristics of the US racial landscape also reflect the lived experiences of racial minority men in the UK. Understanding that this research is globally relevant and not an American-only phenomenon is an essential take away from this study.

### ***US Group Findings and Discussion***

The US group reveals patterns of experienced marginalisation, personal consequences of such treatment, and the struggle for space in a country deeply rooted in racism. The participants come from three states, two racial groups, and varied socioeconomic backgrounds, which allowed for a thematic investigation across demographic differences.

#### *Racial Leprosy*

The themes for the US group present a sequence of experiences resulting in racial leprosy. The men all experience being dehumanised through several mechanisms that stress their status as inferior, racial caricatures. As a result of that classification, they subsequently struggle unsuccessfully to be accepted in the White-dominated social structure that othered them in the first place. This racial leprosy reflects the strained racial climate in the United States, where White supremacist ideology and violence is worsening (Halberstam, 2017). It should be noted that in a group that represents Black and Brown lived experiences, this type of racial leprosy is consistent for both races, although they manifest in slightly different ways. For Zachariyah, it is related to the association with terrorism, and for Omar and Andres it is the characterisation of savagery or inferiority. However both are related to the racist suggestion that men of colour are inherently problematic members of society. This connection has emerged in previous research on racial microaggressions with Black Americans (Sue et al., 2008).

#### *Pain and Mercy*

As a result of the cycle of dehumanisation and rejection, significant stress, fatigue and mental strain emerged as a key lived experiences. From interpersonal anxiety to depressive symptoms, a range of mental health outcomes surfaced in this group. Since psychological effects have been rarely looked at in research specific to racial microaggressions and othering, it is not possible to cleanly compare to other studies. However research on racism and mental health in general supports the possibility of severe psychological consequences resulting from racial oppression (Helms et al., 2010).

While fully aware of the mistreatment and injustice they experience, all the participants approach both aggressors and society in general with mercy and graciousness. In a country with widespread racial tension and attacks, it would be understandable if the victims of this oppression do not react with such understanding. However this is a consistent attitude with all participants, and it showcases the men's willingness to respond to hate with compassion, something that is quite remarkable given the reality they live. It is possible that this is unique to this group, and therefore needs to be further explored in future studies.

### ***Cross-Group Master Themes***

While there are undoubtedly distinct features that emerged from the two different groups, there are also overarching master themes and contextual factors that reflect both populations.

### ***Inescapable Racialised Existence***

From both groups, every participant's lived experience is defined by inescapable racialisation. This includes the inability to evade the type of dehumanisation discussed in this study, and the day-to-day experience of being deemed a race first and a person second. No matter what the context, race operates as such a powerful stimulus that other considerations of their humanity are stripped away. Without any hesitation, society categorised the intentions, worth, and value of these men, essentially reducing them to a preconceived identity. The participant's struggle to break out of these boxes is always unsuccessful. This inescapable racialisation does not only occur in a vague, societal sense, but in intimate, concrete interactions as well. This common experience between all the men reflects a Western landscape that continues to operate in a racially charged manner. The UK and US have yet to reach a point where racial minorities can thrive without be reduced and dehumanised on a personal, institution, and cultural level.

### ***Cycling Racial 'Pre-Trauma'***

'Pre-Trauma' emerged as a significant mental health pattern in every participant's lived experience. Although none of the participants' life worlds reflect clinically significant trauma symptoms, they do, without a doubt, illustrate a cycle of significant stressful racial

experiences that can potentially develop into trauma-based disorders without intervention. The concern that ‘pre-trauma’ could develop into more severe psychological concerns comes from the participants’ tendency to not address the stress of these experiences. Every participant reports a need to immediately “brush off” such experiences, often as a “coping mechanism” instead of actually dealing with the mental effects of being othered (Zachariyah). The reaction to force the self to ‘be okay’ is admittedly a “burden,” and yet it is the only way participants allowed themselves to cope (Zachariyah). This is a feature of toxic masculinity discussed earlier. The patriarchal ideology that their masculinity will somehow be challenged by proactively addressing what they endure prevents a healthy response to such experiences. Cycling racial ‘pre-trauma’ is exhibited by all the men and illuminates the mental and psychological consequences of unyielding racial othering.

### ***Cross-Group Similarities***

Along with the overarching master themes discussed above, there are several themes that emerged from both groups but not necessarily with every participant. Both UK and US participants experience being viewed as an inherent threat. Whether linking this threat to terrorism or criminal behaviour, participants experience the consequences of such associations in institutional and public spaces. Fetishisation also emerged from both groups, specifically the experience of White women discarding or fixating on the men because of their race. It illustrates the way men of colour can be objectified by White women due to the racial power dynamic at play. Internalisation of racism also surfaced from several participants’ interviews, as well internalised anti-Blackness. Social support is healthy coping technique participants in both groups use to feel less alone in the wake of such incidents. Finally, concern for how racism impacts other people of colour is prominent in both the UK and US group. Many participants express distress in how such experiences may hurt their communities, families, and non-White friends. There is an attitude of selflessness in considering the consequences of a racially charged society and a concern for the overall wellbeing of racial minorities.

### ***Cross-Cultural Similarities***

The exploration of this topic in two different cultures reveals the similarities in the UK and US racial climates. With racial issues being a highly charged, politicised matter in the US, there is an impression that racial relations are far worse in America than other

Western societies. However this study sheds light on the reality that many societal features that support the marginalisation of people of colour in the US are also embedded in the UK. Islamophobia and anti-Muslim rhetoric are hugely ingrained into both US and UK social structures (Swami et al., 2017). This is fully exemplified through the themes extracted from the UK group analysis and the lived experiences of the South Asian participants from both groups. The reality that both countries have active racial tension is also evident through the hostility, dehumanisation, and discomfort all the men experience. The sentiment that non-White beings ‘don’t belong’ is woven into the fabric of both UK and US society (Bell et al., 2016). While the countries have different histories in regards to immigration, minority treatment, and laws, they now hold significant similarities in how racism and racial othering is systematically sustained.

### ***Study Limitations***

The main limitation of this study is the lack of racial diversity. Only two racial groups (Black/South Asian) and three ethnicities (Pakistani/Sri Lankan/African American) are represented collectively. For this reason, a thorough examination of how racial microaggressions and othering manifest differently for different races is restricted. The UK group in particular lacks racial diversity with all three participants identifying as South Asian, which makes it impossible to look at racial experiences of non South Asian men of colour in the UK. Research has show distinct microaggressive behaviour is often targeted at particular races, and with only two races represented, this finding could not be investigated in regards to less researched demographics like Indigenous Americans or Black British men (Ong et al., 2013).

### ***Future Directions***

Based on the findings of this study, future research on racial microaggressions and othering should focus on a few different elements. Continued research on microaggressive and explicit racism in the UK is necessary, as the literature on this topic coming out of the UK is severely lacking. This is a significant concern given the racial climate in the UK, which includes both overt and subtle racism towards minorities, and increasing racial tension in general (Khalili, 2017).

Research on the intersection between racial and gender based othering and microaggressions is an area that also needs to be addressed. As this study originally intended to do, vulnerable populations such as incarcerated individuals or at-risk youth also need to be a prioritised demographic when studying experienced racism. Both in the UK and the US such groups are severely underrepresented in this research.

Trauma-based disorders and symptoms triggered by race-related events needs significantly more focus by the psychological research community. The ‘pre-trauma’ theme that emerged from this study needs to be understood more in regards to how it manifests and potentially progresses into clinically significant trauma. In general, the mental health consequences of such experiences needs to be acknowledged and integrated into clinical and research practices. Further development of assessment tools measuring the impact of racial othering would significantly aid this integration. Studies such as this establish a solid foundation for this to happen.

### ***Conclusion***

This study provides novel insight into the mental health consequences of being a racialised being, and illuminates the lived experiences of UK participants, which is a population essentially absent from the literature. This study also compares the manifestation of racial othering and microaggressions in different Western spaces, which is something the literature is lacking as well. The critical point drawn from this work is simple: this is not a phenomenon isolated to one race, one region, one country, or one culture. This method of othering is thriving on a global scale, and is reflective of a world that continues to sustain racial oppression. Racism is by no means lessening; it is simply morphing in response to changing social and political systems (Sue et al., 2008). As researchers and human beings, special attention to these shifts is necessary to address this persistent inequity that is habitually discounted.

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## **Appendix 1: Participant Information**

**Adam:** 22 years old. South Asian/Pakistani. Grew up in Edinburgh. Undergraduate at the University of Edinburgh.

**Kevin:** 19 years old. South Asian/Sri Lankan. Grew up in London. Undergraduate at the University of Edinburgh.

**Humzah:** 22 years old. South Asian/Pakistani. Grew up in Edinburgh. Undergraduate at Edinburgh Napier University.

**Andres:** 22 years old. Black/African American. Grew up in California. Undergraduate at Bakersfield Community College.

**Zachariyah:** 22 years old. South Asian/Pakistani. Grew up in Texas. Undergraduate at the University of Houston.

**Omar:** 20 years old. Black/African American. Grew up in Georgia. Undergraduate at Georgia State University.

*\*All names have been changed to protect the privacy of the participants*

## Appendix 2: Consent Form

### Consent Form

This consent form is for the study “Understanding Race, Mental Health, and Wellbeing: A Progressive Study of Experienced Racial Othering in Institutional Spaces.” Please sign below to confirm you have read and understood each of the sections listed:

- I have received the participant information sheet. I understand that I may ask questions at any point.
- I agree to the interview being audio-recorded and to a typed transcript of the recording. I understand that both will be stored securely on a password-protected computer accessible only by the researchers.
- I understand that my data will be confidential, and that any information in the transcript that may potentially identify me will be made anonymous.
- I agree to sections from my interview being quoted in academic articles. I understand that they will be made anonymous, and that it will not be possible to identify me.
- I understand that participation in this study is voluntary and without payment. I understand that I may withdraw my data if I do not want to participate in the study.

Participant signature.....

Date.....

Researcher signature.....

Date.....

## Appendix 3: Participant Information Sheet (UK)

### Participant Information Sheet

**Title:** Understanding Race, Mental Health, and Wellbeing: A Progressive Study of Experienced Racial Othering in Institutional Spaces

#### **Introduction**

My name is \*\*\*\*\* and I am a MSc candidate in Psychological Research at the University of Edinburgh. I am interested in the intersection between racial microaggressions/racial othering and psychological wellbeing in different populations.

#### **What is the purpose of this investigation?**

The purpose of this research is to explore the relationship between race-related experiences and mental health. The research will be conducted through interviews that will focus on questions regarding your experiences and how they have influenced your wellbeing and the way you navigate through the world.

#### **What will you do in the project?**

The project involves taking part in an interview with myself. The interview will last around one hour. The interview will be audio-recorded and later transcribed. Your participation is entirely voluntary. If you decide later not to participate, you can withdraw and all the information you have given us will be destroyed.

#### **Why have you been asked to participate?**

You are invited to participate because you have self-identified as male, a racial minority, aged 18-22, and willing to talk about your personal experiences.

#### **What are the potential risks to you in taking part?**

Talking about your experiences could possibly evoke negative feelings. Conscious efforts will be made to make the interviewing environment comfortable, safe, and completely confidential.

#### **What happens to the information in the project?**

The audio recording of the interview will be transcribed. Both the recording and transcription will be secured under password protection. All identifying information will be changed or removed to keep your involvement anonymous. The only people who will have access to the transcripts or recordings will be my supervisor and I. Quotes from the transcripts may be included in publications but your identity will always be anonymous. I am happy to answer any further questions about confidentiality.

#### **What happens next?**

If you are interested in being a part of this project, you will be asked to sign a consent form at the time of the interview. If you do not want to be involved in the project, thank you for your time!

## Appendix 4: Participant Information Sheet (US)

### Participant Information Sheet

**Title:** Understanding Race, Mental Health, and Wellbeing: A Progressive Study of Experienced Racial Othering in Institutional Spaces

#### Introduction

My name is \*\*\*\*\* and I am a MSc candidate in Psychological Research at the University of Edinburgh. I am interested in the intersection between racial microaggressions/racial othering and psychological wellbeing in different populations.

#### What is the purpose of this investigation?

The purpose of this research is to explore the relationship between race-related experiences and mental health. The research will be conducted through interviews that will focus on questions regarding your experiences and how they have influenced your wellbeing and the way you navigate through the world.

#### What will you do in the project?

The project involves taking part in an interview with myself through a secure video/call format. The interview will last around 45-60 minutes. The interview will be audio-recorded and later transcribed. Your participation is entirely voluntary. If you decide later not to participate, you can withdraw and all the information you have given us will be destroyed.

#### Why have you been asked to participate?

You are invited to participate because you have self-identified as male, a racial minority, aged 18-22, and willing to talk about your personal experiences.

#### What are the potential risks to you in taking part?

Talking about your experiences could possibly evoke negative feelings. Conscious efforts will be made to make the interviewing environment comfortable, safe, and completely confidential.

#### What happens to the information in the project?

The audio recording of the interview will be transcribed. Both the recording and transcription will be secured under password protection. All identifying information will be changed or removed to keep your involvement anonymous. The only people who will have access to the transcripts or recordings will be my supervisor and I. Quotes from the transcripts may be included in publications but your identity will always be anonymous. I am happy to answer any further questions about confidentiality.

#### What happens next?

If you are interested in being a part of this project, you will be asked to sign a consent form at the time of the interview. If you do not want to be involved in the project, thank you for your time!

# Have you experienced racism, racial othering, or race-related experiences on campus or other places?

We are conducting a research study on the impact of racism on mental health and wellbeing, and we are looking for participants to interview about their experiences

*If you are:*

**Male**

**18-22 years old**

**Self-identifying as a racial minority or person of colour**

We would love to hear about your experiences in a confidential, one-hour interview

Contact

\*\*\*\*\*

MSc Candidate, Psychological Research  
School of Philosophy, Psychology & Language Sciences

raceandwellbeing@gmail.com

## Appendix 6: Interview Schedule

### Interview Questions

Preamble: My name is \*\*\*\*\* and I am doing a research project on racism experiences and how they affect your feelings, thoughts, and emotions. In this interview I want to learn about your experiences with racism or discrimination and your experience as a minority. There are no right or wrong answers. This is a safe space for you to speak.

#### **First of all: What made you interested in participating in this project?**

##### **Perceptions of Identity**

1. What race or racial group you identify as?
2. What do you think other people feel about your race?
3. If you think about the idea of “us versus them” what comes up for you?  
- How do you define who is “us” and who is “them?”

##### **Race-Related Experiences**

1. Have you heard of the term microaggression or racial microaggression?  
-What does the term racial microaggression mean to you?

***If no: offer this definition and then ask have they can talk about what that means to them: Microaggressions are little things that people say or do that have to do with your race that are negative, insulting or make you feel uncomfortable***

2. I have examples of microaggressions. Do any stand out that you can talk about?

***Here I will have examples for the participant to see. These microaggressions were identified in previous research (Sue et al., 2007)***

3. Can I ask you about any experiences of racism/microaggressions that you have had on campus?  
-What’s it like being a student of colour for you?
4. Can you talk about the last racist experience you remember?

##### **Mental Health and Wellbeing**

1. What did you think or feel about yourself after such experiences?  
-About the other person?
2. Do you think these things affect your mental health?  
-If yes, in what way?
3. How you take care of yourself when these events happen? What do you to make yourself feel better?
4. What’s it like bringing up these issues in different places with different people?  
-What’s it like for you talking about these things right now?

Appendix 7: Example Microaggressions

<p>“Wow, you are so well spoken!”</p>	<p>“I’m not racist, I have <u>[insert race]</u> friends”</p>	<p>“You speak good English for a <u>[insert racial minority]</u>”</p>
<p>“You act so White”</p>	<p>“I don’t see race”</p>	<p>White people wearing dreadlocks</p>
<p>A store employee “keeping an eye” on you</p>	<p>Women are interested in you (or not interested in you) because of your race</p>	<p>People look uncomfortable or afraid when they see you</p>
<p>Being mistaken for a service worker</p>	<p>“There is no racism problem anymore”</p>	<p>“No, where are you actually from?”</p>

(Adapted from Sue et al., 2007)

## Appendix 8: Individual Participant Theme Tables

### Kevin (UK)

<u>Theme</u>	<u>Subtheme</u>	<u>Example Quote</u>
<b>Internal Battle</b>	Minimalising and Compartmentalising Race Related Experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I guess the main thing is, um, whether I’m overreacting. Like-like my friends, two of my other friends were there at the time, and then I was like, ‘did-did you hear what she said?’ and they kind of agreed that, like, it was not a right thing to say. They were like ‘she’s drunk, she was drunk’ and I was like ‘yeah she was, she was drunk’”</li> </ul>
	Hesitation to Confirm the Minority Struggle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Um, and I’m quite- I’m quite uncertain as to whether you can expl- like- you can explicitly say that, um, like ethnic minorities are, um, oppressed or like in what way they are oppressed.”</li> </ul>
	Unstable Internal Race Narratives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Um, I’m aware there are lots of stereotypes, as there are with every race... I’m aware that, um, with- with the rise of Islamophobia in particular, um, South Asians are suffering increasing oppression” <b>VS</b> “Um, and I’m quite- I’m quite uncertain as to whether you can expl- like- you can explicitly say that, um, like ethnic minorities are, um, oppressed or like in what way they are oppressed.”</li> </ul>
<b>Racism Within</b>	Internalised Racism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “But at the same time I feel like I have, um, my own prejudices about people of colour, like even with people of, um... yeah even- even people of like- even Black people, or South Asian people.”</li> </ul>

<b>Normalisation</b>	Black Prejudice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Um, but a lot of the time I feel like I have underlying, um, prejudices myself about, um, the relationship between being Black and crime, and I’m quite aware of that”</li> </ul>
	Islam-phobia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “...and similarly with, um, Islam, I- I think it’s far less. I mean its- I- I feel like the prejudice is far, um, smaller but...”</li> </ul>
	Graciousness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “...I mean, she’s a perfectly nice person, she would never usually say anything like that...”</li> </ul>
	Struggle to Address It	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Um, and I guess the thing that it made me feel about myself is, like, I was quite determined to do something about it but I didn’t- I didn’t do something about that kind of attitude that society holds...”</li> </ul>
<b>Fixation on Whiteness</b>	A Constant, Desensitised Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• And it’s almost like you’ve heard it so many times that your- your reaction is just kind of like “that’s quite predictable”</li> </ul>
	“They Right to Put Me in My Place”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “And- and that just causes a great deal of confusion because I’m not ashamed of where I’m from, um, and it’s just- it’s just very odd that they would feel that they have the right to sort of put me in my place on that I guess.”</li> </ul>
	Focus on Skin Colour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “...it’s like ‘no, where, like, where are you actually from’ and it’s obvious that they are talking about the colour of my skin”</li> </ul>



**Adam (UK)**

<u>Theme</u>	<u>Subtheme</u>	<u>Example Quote</u>
<p><b>Zero Tolerance Policy</b></p>	<p>“Call it Out”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “So I mean you just call it out. I always call that out. And I’m just like no, its not, like, don’t do that. And I think I’ve become more aware now as well, calling racism out.”</li> </ul>
	<p>An Eye for an Eye (Or More)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I just said you- you genuinely, if somebody is being rude to me, you’re not giving me respect, I’ll do the same to you. I will degrade you, I won’t see your value, I won’t value you as a person. Whatever.”</li> </ul>
	<p>The Company I Keep</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Because anyone who disagrees is a complete shattered and you’re removed from my life. Never again.”</li> </ul>
<p><b>I Won’t Let them Affect Me</b></p>	<p>“The Ball is in My Court”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I take that from a negative to a positive. They’re negatively affecting themselves fair enough. You can be paranoid all you want, I’ve done absolutely nothing wrong.”</li> </ul>
	<p>Emotionally Thick-Skinned</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “It’s hard but I’m fine. I have thick skin. I don’t show emotion.”</li> </ul>
	<p>Training the Mind to Not Care</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Sure yeah, actually I kind- I would say I’ve learned to do it, definitely. But you know, I’ve now become so immune to that, where I’ve just been like, it just switches on and off consciously like this (<i>snaps fingers</i>) and I’m just like whatever, like, it’s cool”</li> </ul>
	<p>Finding Comfort and Joy in Brownness and Community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To a person of colour, very relieving. ‘Cause they understand you completely. Like I’m speaking to you, you can probably understand some of the</li> </ul>

<p><b>Not Accepted Here, Not Accepted There</b></p>	<p>“Coconut”</p> <p>“Stuck Between Two”</p> <p>Belongingness Defined by Race</p>	<p>stuff that I said, two obviously people who obviously identify as people of colour.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People get called a coconut, right. You can’t call people a coconut, I’ve had people call me that once and I told them off, and I said you can’t say that</li> <li>• So I feel like I can resonate with a lot of people of colour especially who are kind of stuck between two. You can’t really say you’re from the motherland, because you’re not... but then you cant really then- people here then kind of judge when you say that ‘I’m from here’ because they think you don’t necessarily fit in here, with the demographic.”</li> <li>• “So I see that as what people think of race; not really fitting in here.”</li> <li>• “We want to be- we are people of this country as well, we belong here, but we’re not. We don’t get that chance to say that at the end of the day.”</li> </ul>
<p><b>Microaggressions from White People</b></p>	<p>Our Culture is not a Costume</p> <p>“They Don’t Understand”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “And it-I would be willing to accept people who don’t have that if they understood the significance and respected it. and not treated it as a costume.”</li> <li>• “Because when you are born White and you grow up in this country, you’re immune to a lot of issues that we, that I, would face that they’ll never face in their life. So there’s no- I don’t find, I just find it waste of energy trying to speak to them about it, ‘cause there’s no point.”</li> </ul>

<p><b>Different Spaces, Different Experiences</b></p>	<p>White Women, Brown Man</p> <p>Scotland VS England</p> <p>The Student Experience</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “You don’t have a reason to be intere- not interested in me, you’re just saying that because you don’t like the colour of my skin. So I’m guessing you’ve got a reason to hate me so I just got a reason to hate you, you’re a racist, basically, you are. This is racism. You are being racist.”</li> <li>• “England is much more paranoid than Scotland for a fact and I see that a lot, whenever I go on the tube people do look at you, or on the train no one sits next to you. But I’ve had that here in Scotland as well no one sat next to me in a full packed bus.”</li> <li>• “And some students I know aren’t really, again, really open or really towards people of colour, they don’t really associate with them as much. So they find that a bit of a shocker, ‘oh there’s- there’s non White people here.’”</li> </ul>
<p><b>Ambiguity Defining Race and Racism</b></p>	<p>Conflation of Race, Ethnicity and Nationality</p> <p>Microaggressions as Racism (Or Not)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I: So what race or racial group do you identify as? P: Sure, uh, my parents are from Pakistan so I would kind of identify myself as Pakistani. But I mean, I was born and bred and grew up in Scotland, so I kind of hold the Scottish title more to than my Pakistani title</li> <li>• I’m very lucky it’s been a very very long time since I experienced racism. Very long time VS “I have faced microaggressions now and again, now and again, definitely.”</li> </ul>

## Humzah (UK)

<u>Theme</u>	<u>Subtheme</u>	<u>Example Quote</u>
<b>Part of my Ordinary Experience</b>	Everyday, Benign Moments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Um and they always give me looks, almost like I’m going to do something. Um which is completely untrue I’m just minding my own business, listening to my music, I’m walking past.”</li> </ul>
	Consistent over Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“But you can definitely see that—see that it’s not just something that’s been happening recently, it’s been around for years and years. And it stills goes on.”</li> </ul>
<b>Conflated and Assigned Identities</b>	Brown=Pakistani Pakistani= Muslim Muslim=Terrorist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Um, I guess the first thing is when people think of Pakistanis they think of Muslims surely.”</li> <li>“Um the first thing that comes to mind about Muslims is terrorism, and that’s quite a big issue in today’s society, about terrorists and Muslims and the whole thing where they are one in the same.”</li> </ul>
	Anti-Pakistani Experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“...uh and this-this old uh White person came out and uh starting yelling racial slurs and one of the things was ‘P*ki...”</li> </ul>
<b>‘Brown and Muslim’ Backlash</b>	Viewed as a Threat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“...oh I’ll just say it, they’re White people um (<i>laughs</i>) tend to look at me in a way that makes me feel almost afraid or cautious when they see me walking past.”</li> </ul>
	Anti-Muslim Abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“And that’s happening so much now that it’s just become a thing in the news that everyone is just targeting Muslims.”</li> </ul>
<b>Internal Aftermath: Emotional Response to Experiences</b>	Worry about Community and Loved Ones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Um because when I get older and I have a family of my own and I have kids if they experience that same thing I don’t know how I’d handle it.”</li> </ul>

<b>Racial Climate in Scotland</b>	I Don't Belong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• .And the sense of belonging um almost feels likes, 'well if I don't belong here, where do I belong, what do I do now?'</li> </ul>
	Distancing Self from Mental Health Conversation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I: Do you think these things affect your mental health? "P: I think they definitely do (<i>then continues in third person</i>)</li> <li>• "These kind of things build up and- I don't know, I think it's something that you can't really describe because this- it's one of those feelings that's just hard to explain" (<i>participant has tears in eyes</i>)</li> </ul>
	Feeling Dehumanised	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "It just made me feel really upset almost like I wasn't a person at that point, I was somebody- or a thing I guess, I wasn't really classed as equal to anybody or um I wasn't uh like, a human almost"</li> </ul>
	"Blanking it Out"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Um and uh I think that's something that- because it's happened so much, and so often, you just, kind of, I can't remember the word for it but you just kind of 'blank it out' you put it to the side, so don't really- you become numb to it, you become numb to the feeling."</li> </ul>
	An Unaddressed Issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "And it doesn't get talked about much in uh, Edinburgh. Uh, because people tend to just put things to the side."</li> </ul>
	Realisation and Experience of the Problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "And at first we didn't really get it because we didn't experience that kind of thing before, but um after she said it a couple of time we realised yeah, this is racism. Straight to our face."</li> </ul>
Hard to Talk about in Public Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Uh I think it's definitely hard to talk about it in universities and schools."</li> </ul>	

<p><b>Being the Bigger Person</b></p>	<p>Graciousness</p> <p>Leniency with "Jokes"</p> <p>Rising above my Experiences</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "And I understand that's how uh they think and how they react to things. But I don't think anybody in this world is going to take this seriously the very first time that somebody says it."</li> <li>• "But- but the first time I say it, and they don't take it seriously. I don't really um take that to heart that much."</li> <li>• "I am, I think it just gradually happened over time where I accepted the fact that there are better people in this world, like my friends and family, and that's just one person who tended to be an asshole."</li> </ul>
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**Omar (US)**

<u>Theme</u>	<u>Subtheme</u>	<u>Quote</u>
<p><b>Whiteness as a Source of Pain</b></p>	<p>Toxic White Ignorance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The White privilege thing that they have. So, it’s easy for them to say look racism is not happening, because it’s not happening to them!”</li> </ul>
	<p>Animosity towards Dark Skin</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Um, I think that other people generally have this animosity towards, um, African Americans and just people of, African, um, descent. Particularly the-the quote on quote darker skinned people”</li> </ul>
	<p>Racial Leprosy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Okay so what comes to my mind is, like, when I go walk into refined stores, um, and as soon as I walk in there’s a White cop just staring at me, um, you know, for no reason.”</li> </ul>
	<p>“Slavery in a Different Form”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “...you can’t really say that it’s that- it’s that far off from times when everyone was segregated and slavery and all that stuff... But really it’s just slavery in a different form.”</li> </ul>
<p><b>Dehumanisation of Blackness</b></p>	<p>Viewed as a Savage</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Um, because they have, like, they view us as, like, I guess you can say savages.”</li> </ul>
	<p>Racism from non-Black People of Color</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “So, what I mean about that is, you know, I, frankly, experience more racism from non Black people of colour than White people.”</li> </ul>
	<p>“The Mean Mug”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “...one of us held the door open for this, you know, elderly senior citizen who was White... Um, you know, she was, like, walking. And, uh. She didn’t say a word. She just gave a, like, uh, a mean</li> </ul>

<p><b>Ingrained into Our Subconscious</b></p>	<p>Normalisation since Childhood</p> <p>Impact on Self and Community</p> <p>The Lasting Effect of 'Being Othered'</p>	<p>mug (<i>glare</i>) at me and the person holding the door.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Okay so, um, like, that- that was really a thing for me back in high school and middle school.”</li> <li>• and it’s- and for years and years, um, same thing, same hurtful harmful things that are happening, um, you know, it’s ingrained into our subconscious.</li> <li>• Right at the point, I was, like, this is what happens that could very well, very possibly happen to me. And it’s because I’m Black</li> </ul>
<p><b>Paranoiac-Ambiguity around Racial Othering</b></p>	<p>Questioning Validity of Experiences</p> <p>Leniency for Aggressor</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Now that- that example I don’t know if that’s really good enough”</li> <li>• “She realised what she did. ‘Cause she’s- she’s- she’s a good person, I like her.”</li> </ul>
<p><b>Mental Suffering</b></p>	<p>Being Made Invisible</p> <p>Fear and Pain</p> <p>Anxiety</p> <p>Internalising being “Less Than”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “When, you know, at the MSA (<i>Muslim student association</i>) at my school, when I walk in and no one will really speak to me...”</li> <li>• And that hurt me really... I... that hurt me really badly...I’ve never felt that type of pain before that, before then.”</li> <li>• But I still have anxiety when I see the cops or anything behind me or anything, or pulled over.</li> <li>• “But- but my point is yes, so, like, you know, a lot of them, they don’t- they go doing that so they get the police angry and make them want to shoot.”</li> </ul>

## Zacharyiah (US)

<u>Theme</u>	<u>Subtheme</u>	<u>Example Quote</u>
<b>Taking on the Weight of the World</b>	Burden of Being Strong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Any of these encounters, they’re kind of a reminder why I have to be strong”</li> <li>• “And know that you’re, like, lowkey, like, fighting an uphill battle”</li> </ul>
	Burden of Taking the Blame	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The only thing you have in common with this-the person who might have done the attack, is like, race and religion. The fact that you have that in common, people find it- like- it’s a burden on you because some people expect you to apologise for it.”</li> </ul>
	Burden of Proving them Wrong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “So you have to put forth more effort, you have to be aware of everything you’re doing, try not to give anyone an excuse or anything to um come at you”</li> </ul>
<b>Overcompensating for Ignorance</b>	Graciousness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Doesn’t mean you can’t be polite to the person. Maybe just not- you’re not going to want to interact beyond that point.”</li> </ul>
	Giving the Benefit of the Doubt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Um it just makes me- makes me assume that they’re ignorant and they don’t really know any better.”</li> </ul>
	Taking Responsibility to Educate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Because if they’re not aware of it, then you can educate them...”</li> </ul>
<b>Interpersonal and Social Stress and Consequences</b>	Weighing the Risk: Unwillingness to Compromise Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “At the same time it’s, like, it’s kind of scary, ‘cause even if you address something what if you’re risking, like, your relationship with the person?”</li> </ul>
	Betrayal from Close People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “And apparently like, apparently she’s got it in her head that all</li> </ul>

<p><b>Mental Stress and Coping</b></p>	<p>Being Likable</p> <p>Isolating Aftermath of Addressing Issues</p> <p>“Brushing it Off”</p> <p>Inability to Address Each Thing</p> <p>Extra Stress from Race Related Experiences</p> <p>Social Support as a Form of Relief</p> <p>Social Support as a Form of Validation</p>	<p>Muslims are, like, lowkey, up for violence. And it was like, kind of like, shocking and kind of sad to here this coming from her, one of my favorite teachers”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “So somewhere along the line I realized that I guess you’re more likable if you don’t take these things- that’s kind of messed up, but yeah (<i>laughs slightly</i>) if you don’t take these things to heart.”</li> <li>• “It’s when you address issues like this people kind of... they- they box you out.”</li> <li>• “To be honest it’s like a- like, I guess like a coping mechanism for it” (<i>speaking about brushing it off</i>)</li> <li>• “It’s like, the importance increases with the amount of time I have, and the amount of time I can give it.”</li> <li>• “And it’s just, like- it leaves too much to, like, worry about for a single person. It would definitely stress me out”</li> <li>• “I go home and rant. I rant about everything. My parents or like whoever I take it to, I just start ranting get all this steam out of my system”</li> <li>• “...They lessen the load to the point of where it’s like nothing. Like, ‘I understand that this is out there but don’t worry, you’re safe with us, it’s okay.’”</li> </ul>
<p><b>How Race is Considered in America</b></p>	<p>The “R” Word</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Just using the phrase in general, it um- I don’t know, people don’t like to admit that they are racist. Under any circumstance.”</li> </ul>

<b>Being Generalised and Stereotyped</b>	Fitting In (Or Not) in America	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“...It’s like, you want to integrate, but if you still have, like, all these interactions that eventually make you think of, like, ‘us versus them,’ there’s always going to be some sort of boundary.”</li> </ul>
	A Racial Hierarchy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“And then, like, I don’t know, kind of looking down on us. Like we’re not equal”</li> </ul>
	Disregarding or Silencing Minority Struggles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“When you say you don’t see race, it’s usually in a situation where your race has the upper hand. And you’re kind of like, when you say you don’t see race, you’re not acknowledging any of, like, the issues and circumstances the minority in that situation is um experiencing.”</li> </ul>
	Associated with Terrorism and Threat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Um specifically, like, Pakistani and like, South Asian, they, like, associate terrorism with our race...”</li> </ul>
	One of Us = All of Us, All of Us = One of Us	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“I just assume it’s like something in the way that they were raised or like, things they’ve come in contact with the kind that makes them, like, just automatically assume that one human that they- one person they’ve come into contact with or something like that somehow reflects an entire race or culture or religion that they’re talking about.”</li> </ul>

**Andres (US)**

<u>Theme</u>	<u>Subtheme</u>	<u>Example Quote</u>
<b>Internalisation of Inferiority</b>	Internalised Power Dynamics and Expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“...We’re attacking them, we’re- we’re not trying to find a solution and- and be appropriate. Defensive and everything else when it comes to- to who we are. We can’t be defensive about everything.”</li> </ul>
	Whitewashing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Um, growing up I was around a bunch of White people. So it definitely- definitely hard trying to be true to myself. Because all I ever knew was- was their culture and their lifestyle and that’s all I watched on TV, that’s all the music I listened to.”</li> </ul>
<b>Racial Fatigue and Discomfort</b>	Mental Toll of Experienced Racism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“And with-with- with words like that, it can strip you. It can- it can break you down, and- and make you be something you don’t want to be.”</li> </ul>
	Conflicted Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“And I was conflicted because I didn’t know whether to ‘check her’ in that concept and correct her, or think she cares for me as a person, she thought I was a nice person and she didn’t mind my personality and character that’s why we were friends.”</li> </ul>
<b>Rising Above the Pain</b>	Humor as Coping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“It was- it was kind of forced upon me to be able to laugh at situations like that.”</li> </ul>
	I Won’t Let This Define Me	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“It’s part of my id- it’s part of my life. My lifestyle. But that doesn’t mean I will let it define my character. I will not let it- I will not let it be the substance of who I- who I express myself as. It’s not going to hold me back is what it really comes down to.”</li> </ul>

<p><b>Subject of the White Gaze and White Hegemony</b></p>	<p>Fetishisation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Uh, for example if someone were to say ‘you look cute for a Black guy,’ it- that to me is a microaggression. Why-why do I have to look cute for a Black guy, why can’t I just be cute in general?”</li> </ul>
<p><b>Perpetually a Racialised Being</b></p>	<p>Navigating a World of White Dominance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “And- and when they all found out I had played double the time they had and I have twice the skill that they have, they were all in shock. Like it was something unheard of, that someone who looks like me could even be capable of having this much of education in a world dominated by White people.”</li> </ul>
	<p>Struggle with Stereotypes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “They upon- seem to go in with a very, uh, stereotypical viewpoint that I’m ignorant, I’m a tomfoolery kind of person. Very, very, uh, media-oriented when it comes to what it means to be a Black person or African American.</li> </ul>
	<p>Being Reduced to Race</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Just because I’m Black. She doesn’t know who I am, or my name. But she pretty much tells me to fuck off just because of how I look.”</li> </ul>
	<p>A Way of Life</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I live this every single day. Every single day. This is not- it’s not something that happens behind closed doors. Happens at work, happens at school, the media. It happens just walking down, you know, going to get groceries.”</li> </ul>
	<p>Judge Me for Me</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “And I shouldn’t have to prove myself to people based on what I look like. I should have to prove myself based on my skill set.”</li> </ul>