Aboriginal Adolescents' Experiences of Racism

Community Report from Phase 1 of the Racism and Allyship in Aboriginal Youth Spaces (RAAYS) Study:
Aboriginal Adolescents' Experiences of Racism Study
2026

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Acknowledgement of Country

This research was based on the lands of the Noongar people. We pay our respects to Elders past and present. We also acknowledge that researchers and participants took part in this study on the lands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations across the continent. We pay respect to the Elders of these nations past and present.

Terminology

Respectfully, we use the term 'Aboriginal' to refer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples throughout this report. We acknowledge the immense diversity of Aboriginal adolescents and their communities.

Acknowledgements

We want to give a huge thank you to the Aboriginal adolescents who shared their stories, thoughts, and experiences with us. Your voices are at the heart of this research. We deeply appreciate your contributions in helping create change. Thank you to the schools, educators, and caregivers who helped make this study possible. We truly appreciate you for facilitating time and creating space for us to yarn with the participants.

Thank you to the Youth Advisory Group members for bringing their lived experiences and insights to the table. Your input in shaping the research, reviewing findings, and making sure everything reflected real-life experiences has been incredibly valuable. We are also so grateful to the Community Advisory Group (Jodie Clarke, Tony (Tonji) Hansen, Danielle Headland, Angela Ryder AM and Bonnie Walley), whose cultural knowledge and guidance helped ensure that this research was done in a respectful and meaningful way. Your support has kept this project true to community values and priorities.

We acknowledge and thank Wungening for their contributions to this community report, whose cultural guidance, community insight, and on-the-ground expertise helped support the RAAYS team.

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Project artist

Molly West

Molly West is an Aboriginal Yorga living on Ballardong Boodja in Northam, she has connections to the Kimberly and to Whadjuk country. She has always had a love for art and over the past few years, she has explored a variety of mediums and techniques, including doing a lot of work in the digital art space.

Content warning

This report contains discussions about Aboriginal adolescents' experiences of racism. Aspects of the report may be distressing for some readers. Please take care while reading. For more information on responding to racism, please see visit There Is Nothing Casual About Racism or Call it Out.

Contact

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Ethics and funding

This study was conducted in accordance with ethical guidelines and approvals obtained from the following institutions: Western Australian Aboriginal Health Ethics Committee (WAAHEC) (HREC1016) and the Murdoch University Human Research Ethics Committee (2022/187). Additionally, the study received approval from Catholic Education WA (RP2022/29) and the Department of Education WA (D22/0676346). This research in this report is funded by an Australia Research Council Discovery Indigenous Grant #IN210100051 and a Society for Research on Child Development Small Grants for Early Career Scholars grant awarded to Prof. Bep Uink and team.

Research team

Professor Bep Uink

Bep is a Noongar woman from Perth, WA. She is the Director of Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet at the Kurongkurl Katatjdin Centre at Edith Cowan University. Her research focuses on understanding how socially determined disadvantage impacts the social emotional wellbeing of adolescents, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, and how social systems such as higher education can support adolescents' wellbeing

Associate Professor Rebecca Bennett

Rebecca is the Pro Vice Chancellor Equity Diversity and Inclusion at Murdoch. She co-leads the multidisciplinary Aboriginal Culture Education and Equity (ACEE) research lab at Kulbardi Aboriginal Centre, Murdoch University. Her research interests include social justice and higher education; racism and allyship; Indigenous higher education; LGBTIQA+ inclusion; popular and digital culture, and the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning.

Professor Yin Paradies

Professor Yin Paradies is an Aboriginal-Asian-Anglo Australian of the Wakaya people from the Gulf of Carpentaria. He is Chair in Race Relations at Deakin University. He conducts research on the health, social and economic effects of racism as well as anti-racism theory, policy and practice across diverse settings, including online, in workplaces, schools, universities, housing, the arts, sports and health. He also teaches and undertakes research in Indigenous knowledges and decolonisation.

Associate Professor Gregory Martin

Gregory Martin is an Associate Professor of Education at the University of Technology, Sydney. He has a background in adult and initial teacher education programs and has been invited to teach and research in First Nations contexts. Gregory's research interests include critical allyship and pedagogies, learning across diverse contexts and participatory methodologies.

Professor Ashleigh Lin

Ashleigh is a Professor at the School of Population and Global Health at the University of Western Australia. Her research is focused on early detection and intervention for mental health difficulties in adolescents and young adults. She is particularly interested in the mental health of marginalised groups of adolescents, including Aboriginal and LGBTQIA+ adolescents. She is passionate about ensuring adolescents have a voice in research and service provision.

Associate Professor Jenna Woods

Jenna Woods is a Noongar woman with family connections to the Southwest of WA. She has been at Murdoch University since 2010, first as a student and then a teaching-focused academic and is now the Dean of the Murdoch School of Indigenous Knowledges. Jenna's teaching background includes Australian Indigenous studies and community development with a teaching focus on the theory and practice of working with Indigenous communities. Her areas of interest include Aboriginal women's and children's interests, the impact of racism on Aboriginal communities, family violence, gender relations and social justice.

Ms Rebecca Gilis

Bec is a psychology honours student and RAAYS research officer. Ultimately, she hopes to practice as a psychologist with a particular focus on recovery from childhood trauma. Prior to commencing her studies, she worked as a union organiser, where she developed an interest in equity as an important factor in mental health. Previous student research placements have given Bec a passion for conducting anti-racism research in an Australian context.

Ms Jessica Brand

Jessica is an Arabana woman with roots grounded in Eastern Arrernte from Mparntwe (Alice Springs, Northern Territory). She moved to Perth in 2017 with her two daughters and is currently undertaking an Honours degree in Criminology at Murdoch University. Jess coordinates the K-Track program at the Kulbardi Aboriginal Centre, an enabling pathway that supports Aboriginal students in accessing higher education. She has also contributed to the National Indigenous Business Summer School (NIBSSWA) program in 2022 and 2023, providing Indigenous high school students with opportunities to explore pathways into business studies. Her work focuses on supporting Aboriginal students in education, breaking down barriers to access, and creating pathways for success within academia and beyond.

Jamie Everingham (Lachman-Everingham)

Jamie is of Koori (Wiradjuri and other New South Wales regions), Filipino (Visayan) and Anglo-Australian heritage and was born in Western Australia. She is the Project Coordinator for RAAYS at Edith Cowan University. Jamie's previous experience includes research at the Kids Research Institute, Curtin University and UWA, with a focus on strengthening capacity within communities experiencing social and health inequities.

Youth Advisory Group

The RAAYS Youth Advisory Group includes Aboriginal adolescents aged 14 to 22 who bring their voices directly into the research process. Researchers meet with the Youth Advisory Group at least twice a year to hear their ideas and feedback on the study's design and implementation, to make sure the research reflects their experiences and stays relevant to Aboriginal youth. The Youth Advisory Group help ensure that the research approach feels right and resonates with Aboriginal adolescents' daily lives. By working alongside the Youth Advisory Group, the RAAYS team creates a research environment that values adolescents voices, making them active participants in shaping a study that speaks to their realities. This collaboration helps make the research more effective and grounded in the actual experiences of Aboriginal adolescents.

Community Advisory Group

The RAAYS Community Advisory Group is made up of five Aboriginal community members from Boorloo (Perth). They play a key role in guiding the project, offering insights and feedback at every stage. The Community Advisory Group help to ensure that the research is culturally respectful and meaningful by advising on study design, data analysis, interpreting findings, and overseeing how data is handled and shared. This group provides essential cultural knowledge and perspectives that strengthen the project. By helping shape the research methods, they make sure the study aligns with community values and addresses real community needs. The Community Advisory Group also plays a data governance role in the project. When analysing the findings, the Community Advisory Group's consultation assists to ensure the results are accurate and relevant. They also provide guidance in how the team distributes the project's findings with the broader Aboriginal community, helping us communicate results in respectful, accessible ways that resonate with the community. Current Community Advisory Group members have co-authored this report.

Statement of Aboriginal Data Sovereignty

This research follows Aboriginal Data Sovereignty principles, meaning that the community controls the data collected. Participants (Aboriginal adolescents) own their data and have the authority to decide how it is used and who can access it. The Kulbardi Aboriginal Centre at Murdoch University securely stores the data, and the research team, in consultation with the RAAYS Community Advisory Group, ensures that all data usage respects community values and priorities. Access to the data is carefully regulated. While the project researchers have access to the raw data, any external parties interested in using de-identified data must go through a strict process, including consent from participants and oversight by the Community Advisory Group. This ensures that the data is only used to benefit the community and avoid harm.

The findings from this research will be used to educate schools and communities on the impact of racism, develop tools for measuring microaggression in future studies, and advocate for anti-racist practices, all while prioritising the cultural integrity and autonomy of Aboriginal adolescents and their communities.

Executive Summary

Racism and Aboriginal Young People

Racism can make our bodies sick, affect our feelings, and make us feel sad or stressed. When people face racism, they often feel more stress, which can lead to health problems such as chronic health disorders [1, 2]. For Aboriginal teenagers, racism can cause problems like feeling sad or worried, using drugs or alcohol, doing badly at school, acting out, and feeling like they do not belong [3]. These problems can continue when adolescents grow up.

Recent research shows that preventing racism against Aboriginal young people would reduce the mental health gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children by up to 11.2%. [4] **If we are serious about 'closing the gap' in health and educational outcomes, we must address the forms of racism which hurt Aboriginal adolescents and add to these health gaps.**

Listening to Aboriginal Adolescents

Studies show that Aboriginal children and adolescents are at risk of experiencing racism, but their voices are not heard enough [5]. Very few studies have asked Aboriginal adolescents directly about the racism they face, especially more subtle forms of racism.

The **Aboriginal Adolescents Experiences of Racism Study (AAERS)** started to hear from Aboriginal adolescents about their experience of racism. It was led by Aboriginal researchers and community members, in partnership with non-Indigenous researchers. The study looked at the types of racism Aboriginal adolescents (aged 12–18) face in Western Australia. By examining the small, everyday ways racism shows up (called microaggressions), this report helps us understand how common these forms of racism are and where it happen. This work is important because it helps us think about ways to stop racism and support Aboriginal adolescents better in the future. The AAERS was part of a larger Australian Research Council-funded project called Racism and Allyship in Aboriginal Youth Spaces (RAAYS). The RAAYS project aims to understand the impact of daily racism and microaggressions on Aboriginal adolescents' wellbeing and mental health as well as to understand how non-Aboriginal adults can act to reduce and eliminate racism against Aboriginal youth.

RAAYS looked at three groups of people involved in racism:

The AAERS study focused on the targets, Aboriginal adolescents who face racism. Another study, called the *Non-Aboriginal Adults Allyship Study* (NAAAS), looked at how adults can be allies and help stop racism. Both studies are important and work together to show the full picture of racism and how to fight it. Readers are encouraged to explore both reports, as together they provide a complete overview of the dynamics of racism and strategies for addressing it from the perspectives of adolescents and the adults who support them.
The NAAAS report can be found here.

The AAERS study

From 2022 to 2024, we talked with 51 Aboriginal adolescents from six high schools in Perth and the Southwest of Western Australia. Adolescents shared their experiences through yarning-style focus groups. The groups helped us learn about whether adolescents could pick up on subtle forms of racism aimed towards them in interpersonal settings, as well as more obvious, overt forms. Conversations also focused on identifying the different types of racial microaggressions participants experienced, the settings and who was doing the microaggressions, and the responses adolescents had after experiencing microaggressions. Notably, the adolescents who took part in the study did not necessarily use the term 'microaggressions' to describe their experiences of racism; we use this term throughout this report to be able to draw comparisons with international research and research done with Aboriginal adults in Australia.

Findings

All findings contained in this report have been developed by the researcher team and members of the RAAYS Youth Advisory Group and Community Advisory Group.

We found eight different types (i.e., categories) of microaggressions experienced by Aboriginal adolescents which were:

1. People thinking we are criminals or do not belong *(Assumption of Criminality and Second-Class Citizenship)*
2. People thinking we are not smart or important *(Assumptions of Intellectual Inferiority or Inferior Status)*
3. People thinking all Aboriginal people are the same, do the same things and have the same experiences *(Assumption of Universal Experience and Perpetuating Stereotypes)*
4. Mean or rude comments and racial slurs *(Microassaults)*
5. Feeling isolated or left out of social situations *(Environmental Microaggressions)*
6. Not respecting Aboriginal culture and ignoring Australia's history *(Invalidation or Negation of Culture/History/Racialised Reality)*
7. Not respecting their Aboriginal identity *(Invalidation of Cultural Identity)*
8. Expecting us to know everything about Aboriginal culture *(Assumed Cultural Expertise)*

The most talked about type of microaggressions was people treating participants like criminals. People assuming that participants were cultural experts or that they were not as smart as other adolescents were also reported as frequently occurring. Most microaggressions happened at school, and classmates and teachers were often the ones doing them. However, participants also faced racism in public places, such as the shops and online.

Reacting to racism

Participants said that microaggressions made them feel sad, angry, confused, and frustrated. Some participants described withdrawing socially or staying quiet about their Aboriginal identity to avoid being targeted. Others shared moments where they stood up for themselves or turned to trusted adults, most often parents or caregivers, for support. There were also examples of participants trying to justify themselves or explain their innocence, such as pointing out they had money when accused of stealing. These responses show how Aboriginal adolescents are not only impacted by racism but are actively navigating it, processing it, and making decisions about how to respond to it, all the while carrying the emotional weight of these repeated experiences.

Recommendations

If you are an adolescent who is experiencing racism there are many things you can do in response to help you feel strong and in control. These include ignoring racist comments and people, avoiding situations where racism occurs, educating and correcting others, reporting racism, and celebrating your cultural identity. A trusted adult can help you in choosing ways to respond to racism.

If you are non-Aboriginal person who works with Aboriginal adolescents, our recommendation to you is clear, it is critical that you

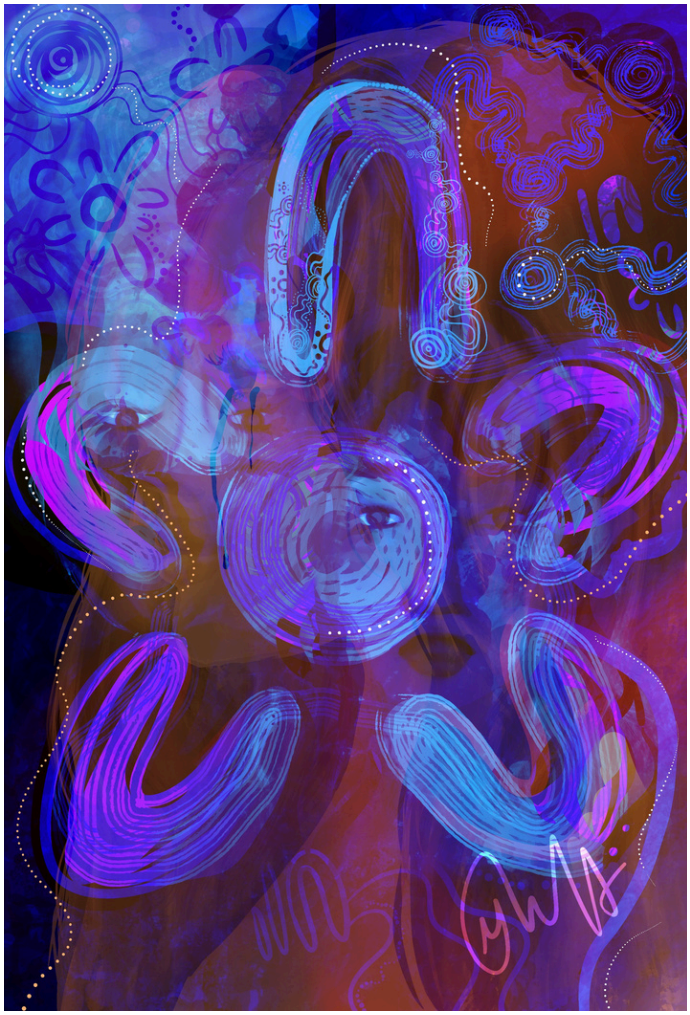
acknowledge that racism, in many forms, is happening to Aboriginal adolescents in the places where you work, and it is hurting them.

Things to do to prevent racism from occurring include making spaces where Aboriginal identity is respected and visible, undertaking self-reflection, watching and reading Aboriginal media, asking your workplace to have an anti-racism policy, and taking the time to educate yourself about how racism occurs for and impacts adolescents. Things to do when you witness racism against Aboriginal adolescents include speaking up and disagreeing with racism, offering support for the adolescent(s) targeted, and educating and correcting others who hold racist stereotypes.

Conclusion

Even though Australians talks about reconciliation, this study shows that racism against Aboriginal young people is common. Microaggressions happen in many places like schools, shops, and public areas; these are all places where young people have the right to feel safe. These experiences can make life harder for adolescents and affect how they feel, how they connect with others, and how fair things are in society. By looking closely at the everyday ways racism shows up, this report helps us understand how common racism is and where it happens. Findings give a deeper understanding of the prevalence and context of racism in Australia. This work provides a foundation for future studies and discussions exploring strategies to reduce these experiences including the development of anti-racism interventions.

'Identity' - Molly West



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture is about sharing; teaching, learning, asking, speaking up for yourself and others. We share knowledge through art, dance, language and more, and have sophisticated systems of farming, protecting the land, animals and environment. Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal Australians are engineers, mathematicians, scientists, artists, writers, strong leaders and teachers. Unfortunately, some people tend to only see the stereotypes they have been told through years of misunderstanding. They look for people or situations that affirm their stereotypes instead of learning more about culture and its people, that dismisses them. This artwork is about feeling lost in the chaos, feeling like you're not seen but always watched. Not being able to simply exist without biased ideas about who you are, being attached to your identity. In this image there are three faces, they may be easily overlooked but they are important to the story. Because of the continual effects of the Stolen Generation and other harmful actions taken since colonisation, many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people lack a sense of self. This artwork shows how culture teaches those who feel this way, to create their identity instead of listening to the stereotypes of others.

1

Introduction

1.1 Why study racism?

As Aboriginal people, we know that racism is still a big problem in Australia. It shows up in schools, workplaces, and everyday life, and it underpins unfair treatment. Studies find that more than half of Aboriginal children have faced racism including being called names, left out, or treated unfairly by adults[1, 4]. Research from the Australian Capital Territory reveals that Aboriginal children experience racism across multiple environments, including schools, public transport, and online. Sadly, the responses from adults are often inadequate or dismissive.[5]

Racism can hurt our bodies, minds, spirits, and culture. It causes stress which can lead to long-term health problems[1, 2]. Around the world, First Nations adolescents who face racism are more likely to feel sad or anxious, use drugs or alcohol, do poorly in school, act out, or feel disconnected from their culture.[3]

1.2 What is racism?

Paradies et al. (2013) define racism as "the types of behaviours, practices, beliefs and prejudices that underlie avoidable and unfair inequalities across groups in society based on race, ethnicity, culture, or religion" (p. 2).[6] Aboriginal people in Australia face unique forms of racism related to settler colonialism. This form of 'settler-colonial' racism includes attempts to erase Aboriginal identity.[7]

1.2.1 Four levels of racism

Previous literature talks about the different ways in which racism against Aboriginal adolescents can occur. Racism can be seen along two spectrums; the level at which it occurs and how *obvious* or *hidden* the racism is.

The levels at which racism occurs include:

Structural/systemic:
the broader societal systems, policies, and practices that perpetuate racial inequality by limiting access to resources and opportunities for marginalised groups. It is characterised by interconnected and cumulative effects of inequity (e.g., historical education policies that excluded Aboriginal students from mainstream schooling, leading to intergenerational educational disadvantage and economic marginalisation.[8]

Institutional:
the policies, practices, and procedures within organisations or institutions that intentionally or unintentionally result in unequal treatment or outcomes for certain racial groups. This form of racism operates within schools, workplaces, or other institutions (e.g., school policies that fail to address racism).

Interpersonal:
interactions between individuals where prejudice, discrimination, or bias is enacted directly. This can include verbal abuse, discriminatory treatment, or social exclusion based on race (e.g., being subjected to racist jokes or assumptions during daily interactions).

Internalised:
when individuals from a marginalised racial group accept negative stereotypes, beliefs, and attitudes about their own group, leading to self-doubt, low self-esteem, or a rejection of their cultural identity.

1.2.1.1 Different types of racism that Aboriginal adolescents could experience

Some racism is easy to recognise. This is called **overt racism.** It includes things like being called names or being treated unfairly because or not being allowed into a place just because you are Aboriginal. Other racism is harder to notice. This is called **covert racism.** It includes acts that might seem polite or fair on the outside, but it still treats Aboriginal people unfairly.

A term used by researchers and community members is **racial microaggressions.** These are small, everyday actions or words that hurt people of colour. They can be done on purpose or by accident, but they still make people feel left out, disrespected, or judged.

Microaggressions can happen in many ways. Some examples are:

- Someone might say something rude or make a joke about a person's culture.
- People might be treated like they do not belong.
- People might act surprised that an Aboriginal person is smart or well-spoken.

These things are part of **everyday racism.** Even though they seem small, they are part of a bigger problem; **systemic racism,** which is racism that is built into the way society works.

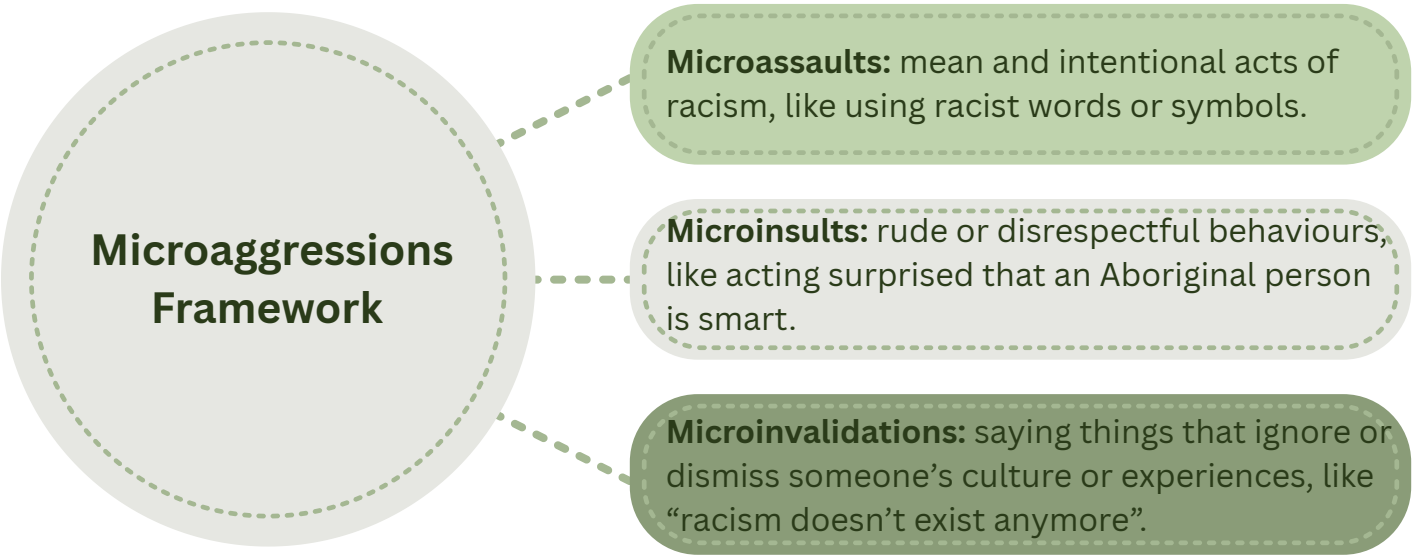
1.3 Why focus on adolescents?

Adolescence (12-17 years) is shaped by physiological, cultural, relational, and collective contexts[9]. For Aboriginal communities the framing of adolescence can differ markedly from Western individualised frameworks. Rather than being seen as a purely developmental stage, adolescence occurs within kinship systems, where young people take on responsibilities for siblings, Elders, and community transition into adulthood is marked through collective recognition [10, 11]. This increase in connectedness is in stark contrast to Western definitions of adolescence which focus on increasing independence and autonomy from caregivers[12] in some Nations, adolescence is marked via initiation ceremonies or cultural teachings[10, 13] During adolescence, Aboriginal young peoples' connection to culture, family, and Country provides resilience and is a recognised determinant of social and emotional wellbeing, which encompasses holistic domains of body, mind, spirit, family and community rather than mental health alone (Gee et al., 2014). However, adolescence is also a critical period in which Aboriginal young people confront racism in schools, sport, and public spaces, experiences that can impact education, health, and future aspirations [14, 15]. Because cultural identity, connectedness, and Country are core determinants of Aboriginal wellbeing, racism directly threatens the very factors that support adolescents' resilience. Feeling strong in one's identity is crucial during this period [16, 17] yet encounters with racism can undermine this strength, erode confidence, and increase vulnerability.

A strengths-based approach highlights that despite exposure to racism, young people continue to contribute to cultural continuity, community care, and collective futures [18]. Understanding racism is therefore not only about documenting harm, it is crucial for supporting self-determination, enhancing protective cultural factors, and ensuring that adolescents' resilience is recognised.

1.4 The Aboriginal Adolescents Experiences of Racism Study (AAERS)

AAERS used the Microaggressions Framework[19] to explain different types of racism that happen in small, everyday ways. The framework includes:



Most of the early research using this framework was done in other countries, so we wanted to see if Aboriginal adolescents in Australia face the same or different kinds of racism. Because microaggressions are often subtle, adolescents might not always notice when they are happening. Acknowledging the resilience that Aboriginal adolescents are forced to develop living within a settler-colonial nation, we also examined adolescents' responses to microaggressions, including emotional and behavioural responses.

1.4.1 Co-designing daily diary methods for future research

Another goal of the AAERS study was to make research tools that work well for Aboriginal adolescents. One of these tools is called a Daily Diary. This research method asks adolescents to record their experiences with racism as it happens or at regular, set times during the day. This method gives clear and detailed information about what adolescents go through each day. The ideas from AAERS are helping to design the diary for the next part of the RAAYS study. Findings about participants' preferences for Daily Diary methods will be reported elsewhere.

1.4.2 Research questions:

In the AAERS study we asked:

1a. Do Aboriginal adolescents experience similar or unique types of microaggressions compared to adolescents in other countries?

1b. If they experience unique forms, what are they and do new categories of microaggressions need to be developed?

2. What is the frequency and contexts of microaggressions experienced by Aboriginal adolescents?

3. Who perpetrates daily microaggressions against Aboriginal adolescents?

4. How are Aboriginal adolescents responding to daily microaggressions?

2

Method

2.1 Participants

A total of 51 Aboriginal adolescents spoke with us as part of the study. They were between 12 and 17 years old, and the average age was 14 and a half years (*SD* = 1.5). Four participants did not say how old they were.

The students came from different types of schools (see also Figure 1):

- 31 were from public schools
- 14 were from a private school
- 6 were from a regional public school in the Southwest of Western Australia

Adolescents of all genders took part. No other personal details were collected.

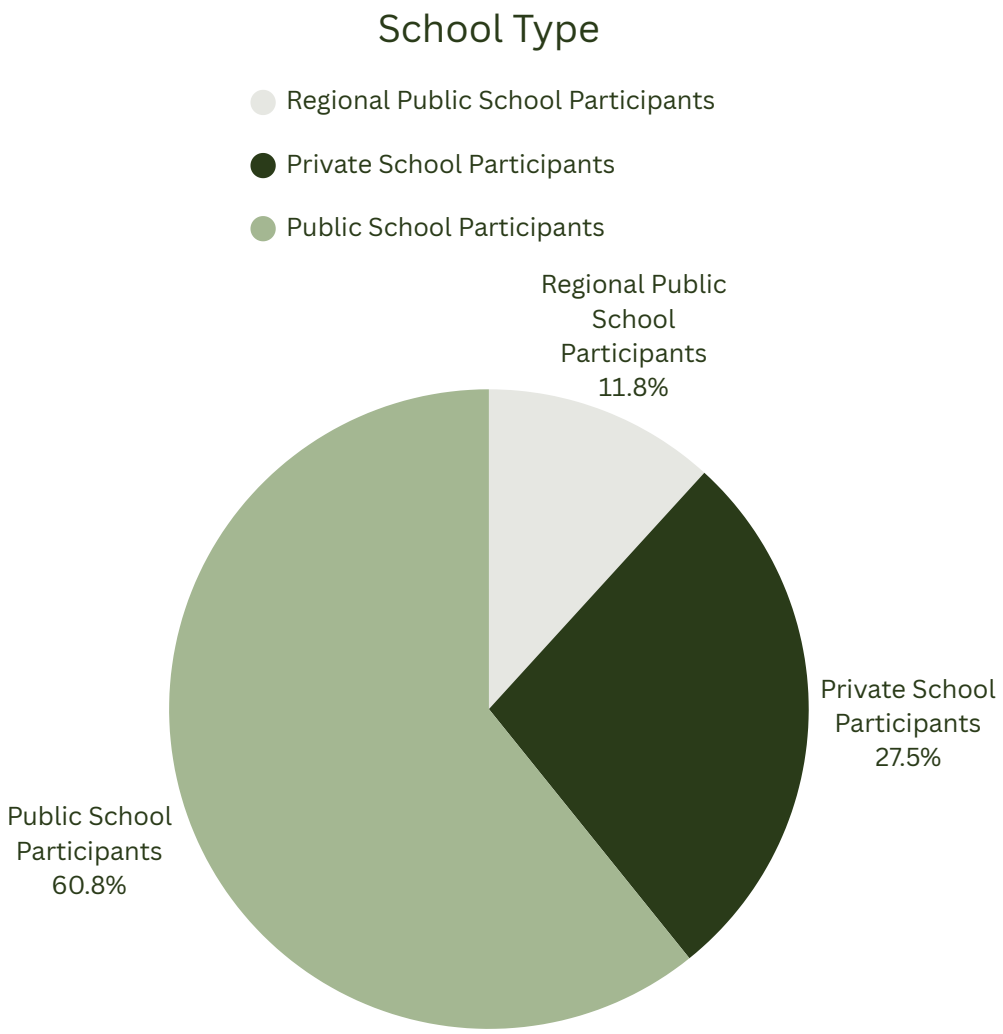


Figure 1. *Distribution of participants by school type.*
Note: The chart shows the proportion of students from regional public schools, private schools, and independent public schools.

2.2 Recruitment process

Between 2022 and 2024, we reached out to high schools in Boorloo (Perth) and the Southwest of Western Australia. We chose schools based on advice from the Community Advisory Group and existing partnerships with programs with schools. In total, 21 schools were invited to join the study. Out of those, 6 schools agreed to take part.

2.3 Data collection

The study used yarning-style focus groups to talk with participants. These groups were held at participants' schools during class hours. The goal was to create a safe and friendly space where adolescents could share their stories about racism.

Each session incorporated components of a yarning method, which is a culturally appropriate method that emphasises relational, conversational, and collaborative engagement. This approach was essential in ensuring that the voices of Aboriginal adolescents were heard, respected, and accurately reflected in the study.

Here's how the focus groups worked:

- Each group lasted about one hour
- Groups had 5 to 10 students
- Some groups had all genders together, others were single gender
- Two groups were based on school year levels (Years 7–8 and Years 9–11)
- Both adolescents and their caregivers gave permission to take part
- An Aboriginal researcher helped lead each group
- The sessions were audio recorded, written down (transcribed), and shared back with the participants to check what we recorded was correct.

The yarning-style focused groups were based around two activities to help adolescents talk about racism that they had seen or experienced. These activities were suggested by the RAAYS Youth Advisory Group to make sure everyone felt safe and supported while sharing.

2.3.1 Yarning-style focus group activity one

The first activity involved the use of "microaggression cards" (see Figure 2, below) created by the research team in collaboration with the Youth Advisory Group. Members of the Youth Advisory Group reviewed items from validated international measures of microaggressions, including the Racial and Ethnic Microaggressions Scale (REMS). [20]During the review, Youth Advisory Group members identified items that meaningfully related to their own experiences and provided input on adapting language and scenarios to reflect the cultural and social realities of Aboriginal adolescents in Australia. Youth Advisory Group members also added additional examples of microaggressions that were not included in the pre-existing measures. This collaborative process resulted in a comprehensive list of microaggressions that were contextually relevant. The full list of microaggressions which were included on the cards can be found in Appendix A of this report, with examples included in Table 1 (below).

Table 1: *Examples of microaggressions included in the study Microaggressions Card.*

Microaggression Type	Example Card
Microinvalidations	"Someone said I don't see race or colour".
Assumptions of Similarity/Exoticism	"Someone asked if you eat kangaroo".
Assumptions of Criminality	"Someone locked their car doors when they saw me".
Microassaults	"Someone called me racial slur".
Universality of Experience	"Someone asked you if you live/used to live in the bush".
Assumptions of Inferior Status	"Someone acted as if I am dishonest".
Assumption of Second-Class Citizenship	"I was watched or followed by a security guard or other workers at the shops".
Environmental Microaggressions	"I felt left out of place in a social setting".
Other	"A teacher assumed that I am an expert on Aboriginal people".

Note: 'Other' represents specific examples of microaggressions given by Advisory Group members that did not fall into pre-existing microaggression categories.

Figure 2 (below) shows an example of how the microaggressions cards were used in the yarning-style focus groups. During the sessions at participants' schools, the facilitators placed microaggression cards on the floor in the middle of the yarning circle. Participants were invited to pick one or more cards that matched their own experiences. They were also given blank cards to write down any other types of racism they had faced or seen, especially if those experiences were not already shown on the printed cards.

When participants selected a card, they were encouraged to share why they chose it, which prompted deeper discussions about where that type of microaggression typically occurs, the emotions and responses it elicited, and the identity of the person who did the microaggression.

The discussion prompts included:

1. *Can you tell us why you chose that card?*
2. *Have you ever witnessed similar incidents in school or within your community directed at someone your age? Has this happened to you/someone you know? Where did it happen before?*
3. *Who did it?*
4. *How did it make you feel?*
5. *How did you respond?*

Additional prompts for conversation were used when needed and included: *What advice would you give a friend who experienced a microaggression? What have you seen other people do to respond?* A full list of question prompts is included in Appendix B.

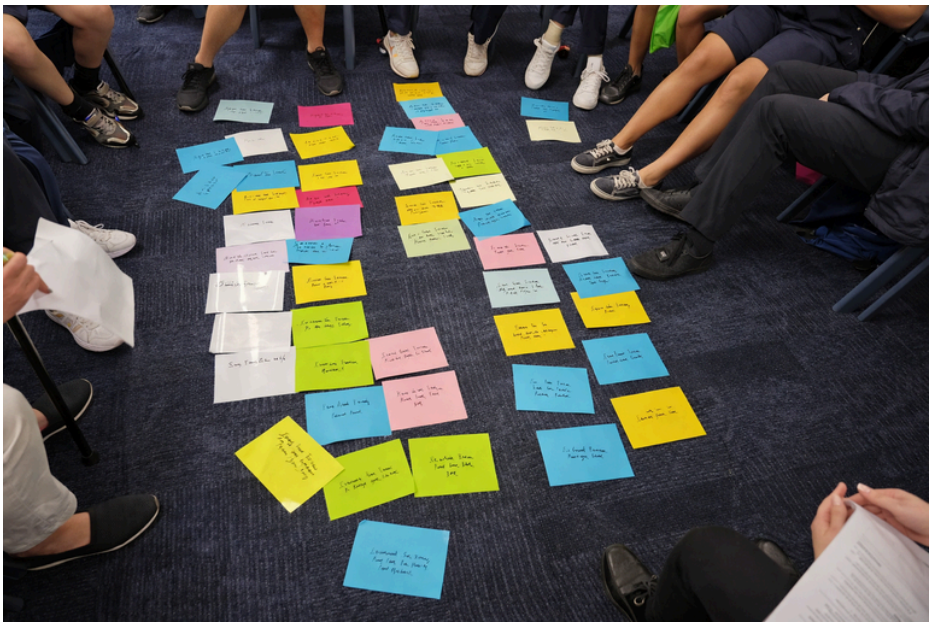


Figure 2: *Example of yarning-style focus group using microaggression cards.*

2.3.2 Yarning-style focus group activity two

The second activity asked participants to rank each of the microaggression cards based on how often they occurred. Participants sorted cards into three columns: 'Often' (defined as daily or every other day), 'Sometimes' (a couple of times per week or month), and 'Never' (rare or non-existent occurrences; see Figure 3, below). After the card sorting activities, facilitators prompted further discussion around participants' experiences of the microaggressions.

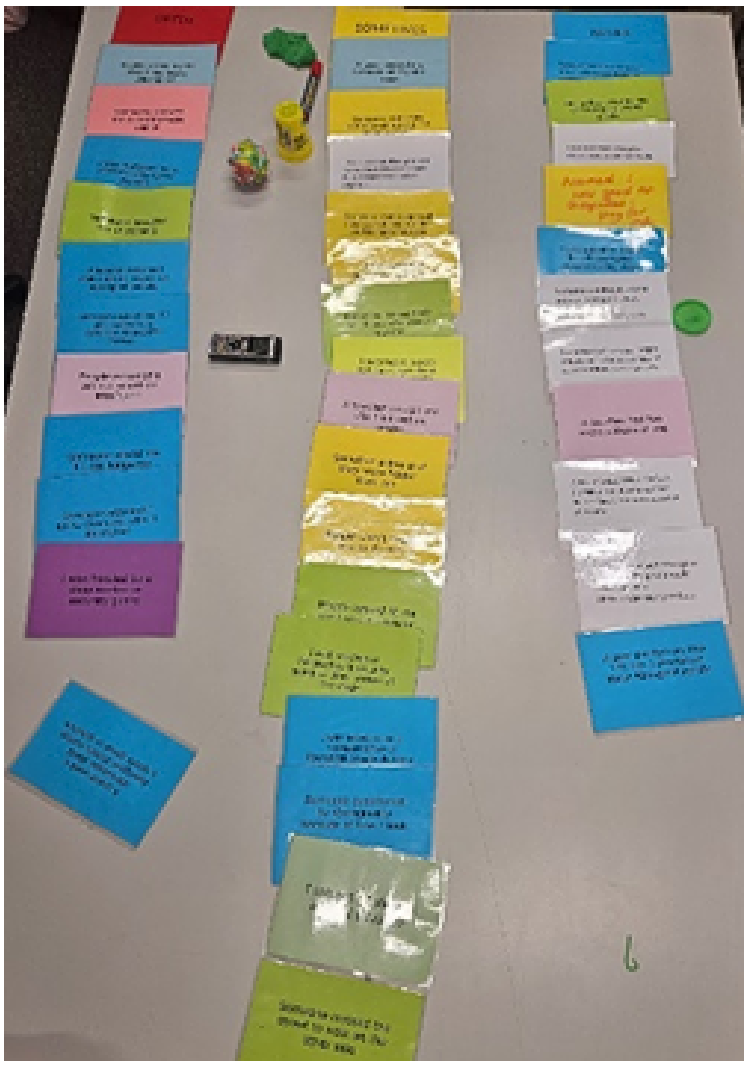


Figure 3: *Example of microaggression cards, ordered by a participant group based on frequency of occurrence.*

2.3.3 Participant safety

After the yarning-style focus groups the Kulbardi Centre Schools Outreach team ran a workshop called Breaking Stereotypes. This workshop helped challenge unfair ideas about Aboriginal people and gave students tools to speak up and feel proud of who they are. The workshop was open to all Aboriginal students at the schools, not just those who joined the focus groups and was part of the safety plan to make sure students felt supported, especially after talking about racism. Also, as part of the safety plan, we made follow-up phone calls to schools one or two days after the focus groups. Students were given a Wellbeing Tips sheet with advice and places they could go for help if they needed more support.

2.4 Data analysis

2.4.1 Categorising microaggressions

We used deductive qualitative analysis to assess whether the types of microaggressions that participants talked about matched what other studies had found before.

We followed these steps:

Step 1:
All yarning-style focus groups were transcribed from the audio recordings. A research assistant checked the writing to remove names and personal details, so everything stayed private and safe.

Step 2:
We made a list of microaggression types based on past research. Two Aboriginal researchers (JB and BU) looked through the transcripts and marked each time a type of microaggression was mentioned. We also marked new types of microaggressions that were mentioned but did not fit a previously identified category. We kept track of everything in spreadsheets.

Step 3:

JB and BU met to talk about what they found. We noticed that some categories of microaggressions were very similar, for example, *Second-Class Citizenship and Assumptions of Criminality,* so we combined these categories. We also saw that the list did not fully match what participants were saying so we looked at studies from other countries like Canada to find more types of racism that First Nations people face. This led us to add four additional categories to our coding scheme to better reflect First Nations experiences *(living with day-to-day cultural and social isolation; alleging oversensitivity; lateral microaggressions, and invalidation or negation of culture, identity, spirituality, and history).*

Step 4:

The updated list was shared with the Community Advisory Group with examples from each microaggression category. Their feedback helped make sure the categories of microaggressions were real and meaningful.

Step 5:

JB and BU finished categorising the data using the final list. We checked how well we agreed with each other using a method called Krippendorff's alpha, which helps make sure the results are reliable.

2.4.2 Identifying frequency and setting of microaggressions

To answer the second research question, we looked at participant transcripts for mentions of:

- Where microaggressions happened? (e.g., at school or online)
- How often different types of microaggressions were mentioned?

One researcher (JB) read through the transcripts and marked each time a type of racism was talked about and where it occurred. Additionally, we used photos from when participants categorised the microaggression cards into 'Often' 'Sometimes' and "Never'. to identify the microaggressions most often ranked as often occurring.

2.4.3 Identifying perpetrators of microaggressions

The team also looked at who was doing the racism. JB counted how many times different people were mentioned, like teachers, classmates, or others. These calculated are presented as a percentage of perpetrator type in the Findings section of this report (below).

2.4.4 Identifying adolescents' responses to microaggressions

To answer the fourth question two Aboriginal researchers (JB and JE) read the transcripts again. They looked for moments when participants teens talked about how they reacted. Common responses were grouped into response types (e.g., emotional responses, behavioural responses).

'Exploration' - Molly West

This image is about exploring culture, the land, the community and yourself. By constantly learning we are filling ourselves with knowledge that we can share with others.

3

Findings

3.1 Types of microaggressions

We identified eight types of microaggressions which were:

1. Assumptions of Criminality and Second-Class Citizenship - i.e., people thinking participants were criminals or did not belong.
2. Assumptions of Intellectual Inferiority - i.e., people suggesting participants were not as smart as other adolescents.
3. Assumptions of Universal Experience and Perpetuating Stereotypes - i.e., people thinking all Aboriginal adolescents are all the same, do the same things, and have the same experiences.
4. Microassaults - i.e., mean or rude comments and racial slurs.
5. Environmental Microaggressions - i.e., participants being made to feel isolated or left out of social situations.
6. Invalidation or Negation of Culture/History/Racialised Reality - i.e., people not respecting Aboriginal culture or ignoring Australia's history.
7. Invalidation of Cultural Identity) - i.e., people doubting or mocking participants' Aboriginality.
8. Assumed Cultural Expertise - i.e., people expecting participants us to know everything about Aboriginal cultures.

Each of these types of microaggressions has been found in other studies with minoritised adolescents in other countries or with First Nations adults both in Australia and internationally. This suggests that the experience of a variety of microaggressions begins as early as adolescence.

Table 2 outlines the categories of microaggressions identified, along with participant examples. Appendix C lists all the examples of microaggressions that participants gave.

Table 2: *Types of microaggressions experienced by study participants*

Category	Definition	Participant Examples
Assumptions of Criminality and Second-Class Citizenship	These include instances where a participant was being judged as dangerous, criminal, or deviant based on Aboriginal status; getting treated worse than others due to being Aboriginal including participant's being blamed for something they did not do or receiving harsher or unfair punishment than a non-Aboriginal peer.	"I walk into shops, any shop—Woolworthsss, Red Dot, Kmart—I walk down any aisle, look back, I see someone staring at me and I don't like it." [in discussion about security guards following them]. "I was watched or followed by a security guard or other worker in shops. It happens most times I go to shops." "I was hassled at the shop, but they was like, 'Can I check your bags?' and stuff. They didn't even ask my friends, they just asked me." "When was this, this was probably last year, this other girl, she was white, I'm not trying to be mean, but she did the wrong thing and I got accused for it by a teacher but it wasn't me" "So I've just been walking peacefully, and then I've just seen someone, and they've just looked at me and they walked to the other side of the sidewalk." "I'm just walking around either at the shops or just in the streets and people just always eye me off like I'm going to hold them up, like pull a knife out or something like that."

Category	Definition	Participant Examples
Environmental Microaggressions	These include events of environments in schools or social settings that made participants feel out of place. These were typically indirect (i.e., not directed at the participant) such as non-welcoming environments, being the only Aboriginal person in the room, or overhearing jokes about Aboriginal people.	"I saw a peer being made fun of because they're Aboriginal. I saw it one time at the shops. I was walking, and then a group of people are just like, 'Oh, why do you look like that? What's your family?' stuff like that." "I know one of the netball teams they wouldn't let there be an all Aboriginal team because they said Noongar girls were too violent." "Yeah, it definitely comes out a lot around Invasion Day" [online jokes about Aboriginal people]
Assumption of Inferior Status and Intellectual Inferiority	This included instances where participants were being treated as less able or less important because they were Aboriginal. This included someone assuming they are not smart because they are Aboriginal, being treated as less smart than peers or presumed to be less able to do a task/job than non-Aboriginal peers.	"In homework club, one of the teachers was surprised that I was doing...she gave me hard maths puzzles, and I could do them."
Assumed Cultural Expertise Invalidation or Negation of Culture/History/Racialised Reality	This refers to the experience of facing misinformation, negative beliefs, denial, or a general belittling or mocking of participants' culture, values, beliefs, and history. This also included experiences where someone had denied participants' experiences of racism.	"I've seen that happen. They say, when there's Stolen Generation, 'Oh, it happened thousands of years ago, let it go.' Or like for Australia Day and stuff, when they say, 'Let it go, it's just a day." "...they mimic throwing a spear at me". "They mimic dances after NAIDOC and stuff".

Category	Definition	Participant Examples
Cultural Identity Invalidation	Comments or actions that policed participant's cultural identity or cast doubt on their Aboriginality. This occurred through reference to skin tone, blood percentage or other aspects of their physical appearance.	"Someone asked me what percentage Aboriginal I am." "Sometimes people call me whitewash." "I just got teased about the colour of my skin, saying that I couldn't be Aboriginal because I was really white" "Someone questioned my Aboriginality because of how I look so I've had that happen pretty much all my life from a very young age even in high school by a lot of my friends. They're like, "You're not Aboriginal, you're white," and I'm like, "No, I am," and it made me feel very much like I couldn't identify as it."
Assumed Cultural Expertise	This referred to comments or questions where a participant was expected to hold cultural knowledge or expertise (e.g., language, cultural protocols).	"When they ask you to speak your own language. Like, we don't get taught to speak our own language. It's not like we're used to doing it." - "They just ask if I know the language, they ask like, 'What's this mean, what's that mean, what's this mean?'" "A teacher assumed that I am an expert on Aboriginal people. Because people, they will assume you're an expert, even though you might not even be from there.... They'll just like ask you what the six seasons are, and you won't have any clue. It's just annoying."

Category	Definition	Participant Examples
Assumptions of Universal Experience and Perpetuating Stereotypes	Includes instances where participants encountered assumptions that all Aboriginal people have the same experiences/ do the same types of activities, or typical stereotypes of Aboriginal people. This included the specific stereotype that all Aboriginal people are related to or know one another.	“Someone asked me if I lived or used to live in the bush. ‘How does it feel to live in the bush? Or how does it feel...your people live in the bush?’” “[They] Ask if you can dance...Like “can you do Aboriginal dance?” "Someone assumed I knew everyone who is Aboriginal...because every white person thinks I know every Aboriginal."
Microassaults	These were obvious verbal or physical assaults, such as name calling, that were intended to hurt participants. This included being shown racist images if participants were directly shown these images.	“Most of the people in my year, they called me a ‘boong’ and ‘abo.’” “My peers tease me because of my skin tone, couple of my friends a few times just made fun of me because of my skin colour.” “They’ll show a meme of an Aboriginal getting bashed by a white person.” “I get sent this one photo of – I don’t know, it’s not that bad, but just like a dog standing up and said, ‘I’ve had enough of these N word.” “When you play sport people just try and get into your head and they’ll just absolutely hammer you with names.”

3.2 Frequency of microaggressions

Table 3 (below) presents the percentage of microaggressions which fell into each category. *Assumptions of Criminality and Second-Class Citizenship* was the most frequently discussed type of microaggression by participants, followed by *Assumed Universal Experience and Perpetuating Stereotypes and Microassaults* . Categories such as *Environmental Microaggressions, Cultural Identity Invalidation, Assumption of Inferior Status and Intellectual Inferiority and Invalidation or Negation of Culture/History/or Racialised Reality* were reported less frequently although still a meaningful proportion.

Table 3: *Frequency of microaggressions discussed by study participants*

Category	Frequency (number of examples given)	Percent (%) of total microaggressions
Assumptions of Criminality/Second-Class Citizenship	60	29.3
Invalidation or Negation of Culture/History/or Racialized Experience	18	8.8
Environmental Microaggressions	17	8.3
Assumption of Inferior Status	18	8.8
Assumed Universal Experience	33	16.1
Microassaults	27	13.2
Cultural Identity Invalidation	19	9.3
Assumed Cultural Expertise	13	6.3

Table 4 (below) presents the microaggressions types that participants ranked as occurring most often, followed by those occurring less frequently, based off the activity where they ranked microaggressions as occurring 'Often', 'Sometimes', and 'Never'. This activity was completed by participants in six of the seven yarning-style focus groups whereas this activity was not completed by one group as time did not permit. Table 4 presents the examples of microaggressions which four or more (i.e., 70%) of the groups ranked as happening 'Often' and 'Sometimes'. Notably, no microaggressions were placed in the 'Never' category by four or the groups. Given this, the "Never" column has been excluded from the table below to emphasise patterns of regularity rather than rarity. Some microaggressions cards that were placed in the "Never" category by a few groups included being accused by police of selling drugs and being told that race and culture should not be talked about anymore. Even though these things were mentioned less, they are still important. "Never" meant the event did not happen or happened very rarely (like once or twice a year).

Table 4: *Participant rankings of frequency of microaggressions*

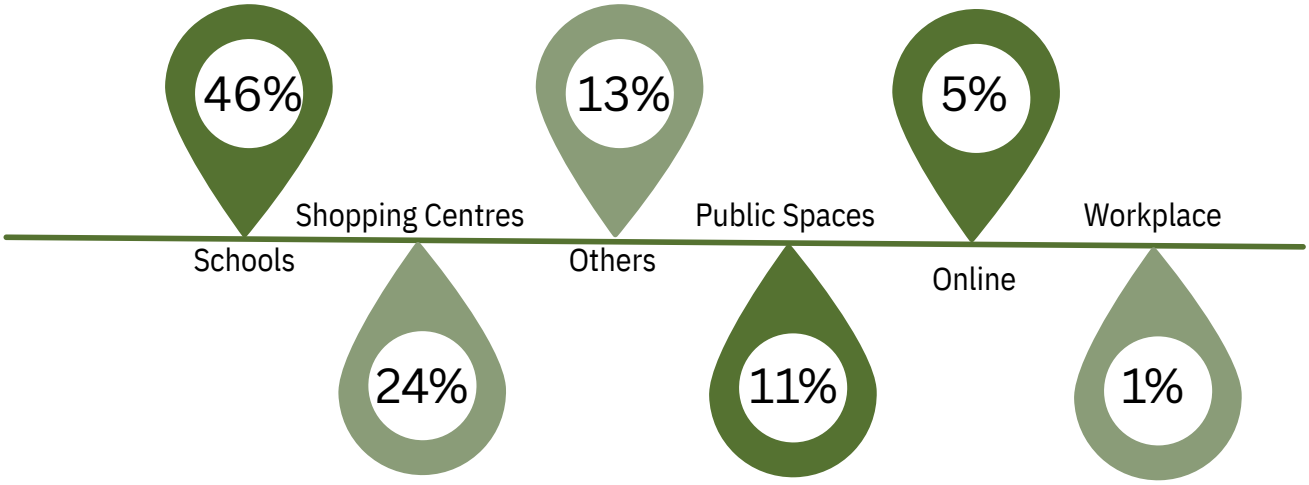
Microaggression Example	Microaggression Type
Often	
Someone assumed I knew everyone who is Aboriginal.	Assumed Universal Experience and Perpetuating Stereotypes
Someone asked me if I am related to a different Aboriginal person.	Assumed Universal Experience and Perpetuating Stereotypes
A peer assumed I am an expert on Aboriginal people.	Assumed Universal Experience and Perpetuating Stereotypes
I overheard a peer telling a joke about Aboriginal people.	Environmental Microaggression
Someone called me bad names.	Microassaults
Someone asked me what percentage I am.	Invalidation of Cultural Identity
Someone showed me a racist image online.	Environmental Microaggression
Someone accused me of stealing.	Assumption of Criminality and Second-Class Citizenship

Microaggression Example	Microaggression Type
Sometimes	
A teacher had low expectations of me.	Assumption of Inferior Status and Intellectual Inferiority
People didn't expect me to do well.	Assumption of Inferior Status and Intellectual Inferiority
A teacher treated me like I am not as smart.	Assumption of Inferior Status and Intellectual Inferiority
I was asked to be a representative of Aboriginal people during a school discussion.	Assumed Cultural Expertise
Someone acted as if they were better than me.	Environmental Microaggression
Someone locked their car doors when they saw me.	Assumption of Criminality and Second-Class Citizenship
People didn't expect me to do well.	Assumption of Inferior Status and Intellectual Inferiority.
Someone asked me if I live/used to live in the bush.	Assumed Universal Experience and Perpetuating Stereotypes

As Table 4 shows, participants ranked experiencing stereotypes and assumptions about Aboriginal people (Assumed Universal Experience and Perpetuating Stereotypes), being treated by teachers as if they were less academically capable (Assumption of Inferior Status and Intellectual Inferiority), people assuming they were doing or about to do something illegal (Assumption of Criminality and Second-Class Citizenship), being made to feel out of place (Environmental Microaggression), having their Aboriginality questioned (Invalidation of Cultural Identity) and being expected to be experts in Aboriginal cultures (Assumed Cultural Expertise) as occurring most frequently in their lives. Only one example of **overt racism** (being called bad names) was ranked as occurring often or sometimes.

3.3 Where microaggressions occur

Schools (46%) were the most common setting where participants said microaggressions occurred, followed by shopping centres (24%) and public spaces (11%).
Online interactions and workplaces were less frequent settings yet, still mentioned as relevant, while the 'Other' category highlights various settings, such as the sporting field, home, friend's home, and/or public transport.



3.4 Who does the microaggressions

There was a diverse mix of people who committed microaggressions. Peers (usually classmates) were the most frequently mentioned by participants (Figure 5), followed by teaching staff, security guards, shop workers, and strangers. Ten per cent of perpetrators were classed as "Other," which included family members and strangers. Although, less commonly mentioned, police officers were also noted as perpetrators of microaggressions.

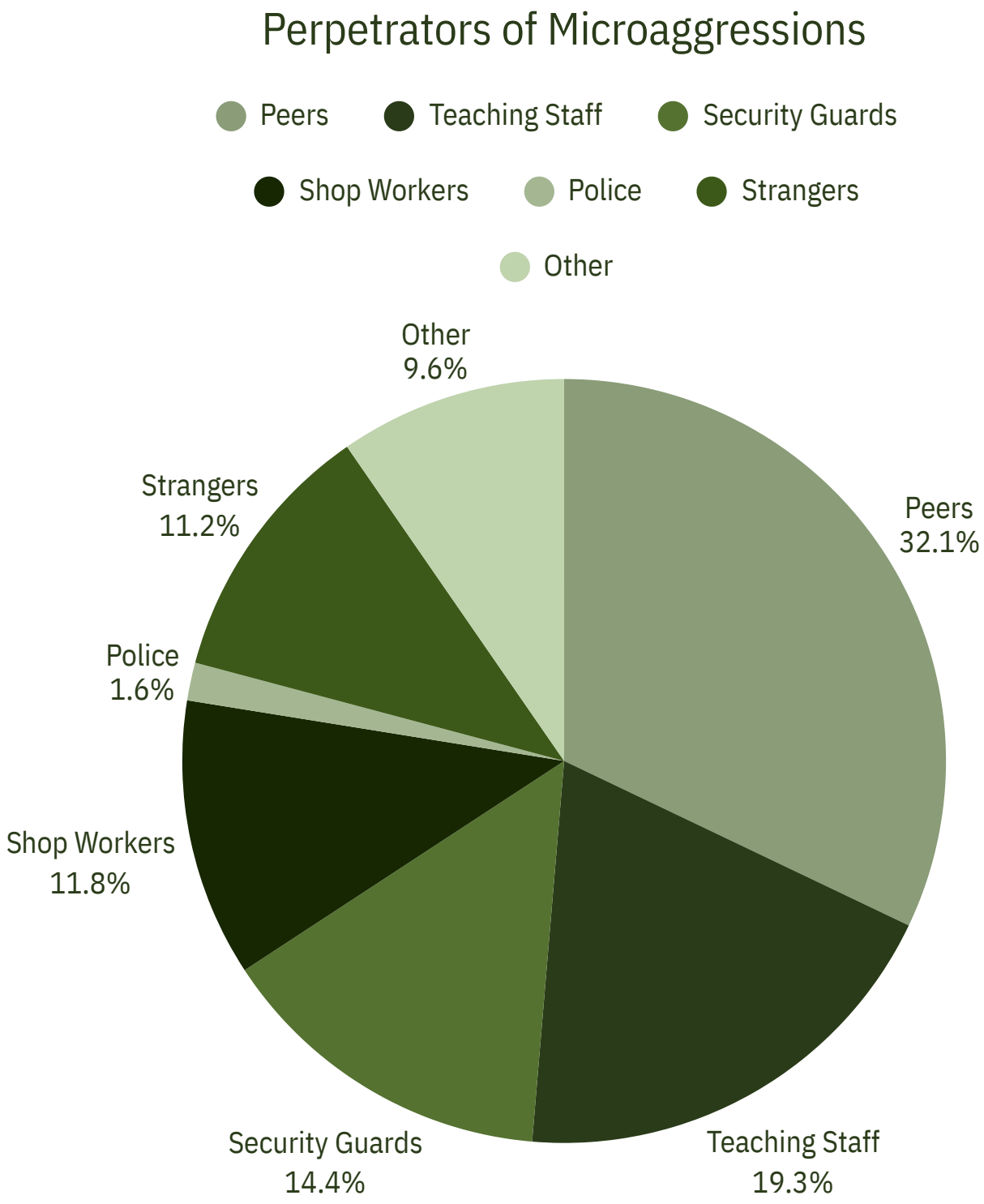


Figure 4: *Distribution of perpetrators of microaggressions*

3.5 Responses to microaggressions

Participants' responses to prompts about how they responded to specific microaggressions and how they felt after experiencing these provided deeper insight into how they dealt with daily racism. Participants' responses not only reflected how they responded at that moment but also, how they processed the emotional impact of experiencing microaggressions, how they decided if they should respond and how they made sense of it. These responses are captured in Table 5 (below).

Table 5: *Participant responses to microaggressions*

Theme	Description	Example Quote
Emotional Responses	Sadness, hurt, anger, fear, shame, and frustration when experiencing racism/microaggressions.	"It made me feel very much like I couldn't identify as [Aboriginal] it." [in response to an Invalidation of Cultural Identity] Participant 1: "Felt out of place in a social situation". Participant 2: "I get that feeling as well" Participant 1: "Yeah, and really, we shouldn't feel out of place, but I feel like – yeah, still to this day I feel out of place." "... I got called down here and he asked if we were actually black or Aboriginal... I told my mum... [it made me feel] upset" "We were like in disbelief. We were shocked – [at being called 'abo' by a friend." "This isn't me, this is my brother at primary school, they're rac... oh never mind I can't be...it happens a lot. It just gets annoying. If I had the option to do something I would."

Theme	Description	Example Quote
Cognitive Responses	Justification, feeling the need to validate one's innocence while disproving the accuser's perception and accusations.	Participant 1: "I'm not stealing, I got money.... They just went like – they [shopkeepers] just look at you still and they don't say anything." Participant 2: "they don't believe you" Participant 1: "Yeah, yeah. I'm like "I don't have anything," do a twirl." "With a teacher treating me like I'm not as smart, I feel like that could play on your mind, like it could make you think that you're not good enough." "It doesn't really bother me, but if they're saying, 'Are you even Aboriginal?' or, 'What percentage are you Aboriginal?' and then they say, 'You're probably like 0.03%' it's just weird...It depends how they say it" "It's not even something you can control, that's just genetics." [re: skin colour]
Behavioural Responses	Actions taken to deal with racism/microaggressions, including withdrawal, ignoring, or telling someone.	Participant 1: "Most of the people in my year they called me a 'boong' and 'abo' before, and they mimic throwing a spear at me.... I ended up having – I had a fight with someone over it, and I got suspended." "Just don't listen to them.... Block them out. Block them. Just act like you don't hear them." "Yeah, I got called down here and he asked if we were actually black or Aboriginal... I told my mum."

Theme	Description	Example Quote
Verbal Responses	Calling out racism or expressing anger/frustration directly	Participant: "We get sometimes angry of getting accused for things, and like – because I don't steal. I'm a good kid. I work. I have two jobs, a lot of money and like I hate getting followed around the store. Like a few times I... because I lost it. I was kind of angry. So I was like "can you F off?" And they were like, "Get out of the store now. Don't swear at me." "When they say it to me, I ask it back to them. Just say the Asians, I'll be like "Are you Asian or you're something else?" "They weren't believing me. I'm like, "I'm literally one of the most goodest kids here. I don't do any of that stuff." "But it's about that confrontation, like if someone says something you don't really want to confront them about it. It's just kind of awkward.... They usually take it the wrong way and think you're coming at them." "the Karen said, "You're an N-word, of course you have drugs," and then - she said the legit word and I said, "You can't say that, you're not black," and then she's like, "I'm quarter black so yeah," and then I said, "You might have drugs."
Social Withdrawal / Isolation	Feeling left out, excluded, or disconnected due to racial dynamics or actively avoiding places where microaggressions occur.	"I never go to Red Dot... That's why I call it Racist Dot."
Seeking Support / Authority	Involving caregivers or trusted adults in response to racism/ microaggressions.	Q: "What happens, do you tell a teacher, or what happens when you overhear these jokes, or you hear actually really horrible things? Participant: " Yes. I tried to tell the teacher what happened. Nothing really happened." "It's more responsible to report them than argue with them. Because then people are just going to think you're more childish arguing with them. But not in the – depends on the situation it is. If they follow you for no damn reason, I would report it."

Theme	Description	Example Quote
Self-Affirmation & Identity	Reclaiming cultural identity or resisting cultural erasure.	"I feel a bit angry, because somebody else trying to change who I am, trying to change my culture and that. So, it's just going to make me a bit angry. " "My mum and dad probably richer than them." [in response to someone assuming they live in the bush] "... ask me to do the Welcome to Country in [Noongar] .. I was like, one, I'm not even Noongar and like two, how am I meant to learn that?" "They'll be like "Who's Aboriginal on your fa" - like which side of your family is aboriginal?" Like why do you really need to know? "Prove them wrong... Be smart.' [in response to an assumption of intellectual inferiority].

Some participants said they felt angry or frustrated, especially when they were followed in shops, blamed for things they didn't do, or left out. Others said they felt hurt or sad.
Some participants talked about feeling scared especially when they were alone or being watched. A few said they did not feel much at the time, but later, when they had time to think about it, the feelings came up. One participant stated:

> "Someone said I'm pretty good looking for an Aboriginal. When they say it, it doesn't really hurt, but when you reflect on it later it hurts because it's not just, 'You're good looking', no it's like, 'You're good looking for an Aboriginal' which like is that what you mean by that" - Participant.

Participants also talked about how they tried to understand what was happening when they faced microaggressions. Some said they defended themselves, like showing they had money when someone wrongly thought they were stealing. Others said they could tell when someone was being racist, not just by the words used, but by how they were said or the look on the person's face. One participant explained:

> "Just the way they say it... or their attitude... or their facial expressions."
> - Participant.

Some participants reflected on the bigger picture of microaggressions. One participant highlighted how racism is ongoing and connected it to colonisation:

> "Because of all the racism back when it was a British colony, and it just goes on." - Participant.

Regarding behavioural responses, there was no one way to respond. Some participants stood up for themselves, speaking back or confronting racism when it happened. A few shared that they had been in fights or had gotten into trouble after reacting to racism, which they perceived as unfair punishment. Others took a different approach, avoiding certain places altogether, staying quiet, or choosing not to tell people they were Aboriginal. As one participant stated:

> "At my old school, I didn't really tell anyone that I was Aboriginal."
> -Participant.

Some participants said that they usually ignored microaggressions unless it became particularly bad, and in those cases, they would talk to a parent or trusted adult. One participant shared:

> "If it's big, I'll tell my mum... and my mum will do something."
> - Participant.

Experiencing microaggressions also had an impact on friendships and belonging. Several participants talked about feeling left out or different, like they did not fully belong in their school or social group. As one participant put it:

> "Yeah, and really, we shouldn't feel out of place, but I feel like, yeah, still to this day I feel out of place." - Participant.

Despite these experiences, many also said that family, especially parents or grandparents, were people they turned to for support and advocacy. One participant described how their mum stepped in after a racist incident:

> "She went and told them that they can't just racially assume it was me just because I'm Blak." - Participant.

Finally, participants expressed frustration about being expected to act as cultural experts or speak for all Aboriginal people. One participant shared:

> "They asked me to do Welcome to Country... I'm not even Noongar,"

Pointing to how these assumptions can be uncomfortable and unfair. Others talked about being questioned about their identity because of how they look. One participant put it bluntly:

> "It's just frustrating, because you're either Blak or you're not." - Participant.

Still, many participants held firm in their identity, pushing back against these assumptions with pride and confidence. As one participant said, to put it simply:

> "No, I am [Aboriginal]."- Participant.

4
Discussion

This report shared what we learned from the first round of yarning-style focus groups in the AAERS study. When we visited schools, it was clear that Aboriginal adolescents, even as young as 12 understood racism and could recognise it in their daily lives. Racial microaggressions happened often and in many places, including schools, shops, and online. Participants said they felt sad, angry, left out, or even got into fights because of how they were treated. Some felt like their identity was not respected. This study shows what life is really like for many Aboriginal adolescents in Australia. Promisingly, participants in the study were dedicated to raising awareness of their experiences of racism to be able to seek justice.

4.1 Types of microaggressions

Participants frequently shared accounts of being followed by security personnel or shop workers illustrating the category of Assumptions of Criminality and Second-class Citizenship. Likewise, participants reported being called derogatory names, such as "monkey" by peers (a form of microassault). These findings are like findings from studies with BIPOC adolescents in other countries. [21] These frequent encounters with racism reflect deeper systemic issues embedded in institutions and public attitudes.

When asked to rank which microaggressions occurred most frequently, participants responses highlighted that microaggressions are often couched in well-worn stereotypes or simplified versions of 'Aboriginality'. Many of these microaggressions reinforce barriers to equity in education, employment, and social mobility. Important, participants also reported straightforward, overt racism, such as racial slurs, as happening often. This finding suggests that overt racism is not going away for Aboriginal adolescents but that it is being added to with various types of covert racism.

Many of the microaggressions experienced by participants have previously been reported by Aboriginal adults in Australia and First Nations adults in other countries. For example, the Cultural Identity Invalidation microaggression is supported by research with First Nations college students in Canada who experience 'enduring unconstrained voyeurism' (i.e. "non-Aboriginal strangers prying, poking and prodding them about their identity" [22]). Likewise, Aboriginal adults in Australia report being made to feel "too white to be black and too black to be white"[23, 24]. Aboriginal identities are also invalidated through structural forms of racism such as exclusion of Aboriginal content in school curriculum and streaming First Nations students into sports of trade-based classes instead of academically focused classes[25].

For adolescents, the surveillance and questioning of Aboriginality expressed through Cultural Identity Invalidation microaggressions could be especially hurtful given the heightened focus on identity development during this period. The acts included in the category of Invalidation or Negation of Culture/History/Racialised Experience further dismiss intergenerational trauma (e.g., the Stolen Generations), erode cultural identity and invalidate lived experiences. These microaggressions risk interrupting an adolescents' sense of pride and connection to culture, which are fundamental for resilience and well-being.

Assumed Cultural Expertise was another microaggression category that was unique to being Aboriginal. This category referred to comments or questions where a participant was expected to hold cultural knowledge or expertise. Most often, these requests came from schoolteachers when 'Aboriginal subjects' were being taught in class. Similar experiences have been reported by First Nations people in other settler colonial nations (e.g., Defending Native Identity- the frustration at having to be a representative of all Aboriginal people[26-28]). However, being continually asked to provide cultural knowledge by teachers may be especially impactful for adolescents given that they are supposed to be the learners rather than the teachers in school settings. This type of microaggression also limits Aboriginal students to the presumption that all they can provide is knowledge on culture, rather than the vast amount of knowledge or perspectives that they hold about other topics. Additionally, expectations of young people to hold certain amounts of knowledge of cultural practices and protocols contrasts with Indigenous ways of knowing and being where young people are not expected to know or share the same amount of information as older community members.

4.2 Racism is everywhere, all the time

Concerningly, microaggressions most frequently occurred in school settings where adolescents are supposed to be safe and free from harm. These findings highlight that schools are critical spaces for examining how anti-racist efforts can reduce the racism experienced by Aboriginal adolescents. Additionally, our analysis of the perpetrators of microaggressions revealed that they are widespread with peers, teachers, strangers and police also emerging as perpetrators, highlighting how widespread racism is across different social roles. Participants also highlighted the unjust nature of the punishment they receive when they react to racism, while the perpetrator goes unaccounted for. This was especially true within school settings. Currently, Western Australian schools do not have specific disciplinary policies for responding to perpetrators of racism.

Participants' descriptions of their experiences of microaggressions highlighted that they are not discrete events with a time-limited response. Instead, participants spoke about microaggressions and racism more generally as ever-present and requiring both anticipatory responses to situations where microaggressions were likely to occur, as well as having lingering effects on well-being. In this sense, racism was happening everywhere and all the time for Aboriginal adolescents in the study.

4.3 Microaggressions have multiple, lasting impacts on Aboriginal adolescents

The ways that participants reported responding to racism, how they feel it, think about it, and deal with it, show not just how harmful it can be but also how much energy they put into towards managing racism. Some participants talked about feeling angry or sad after experiencing a microaggression. Others said they avoided places where racism happened a lot or stayed quiet about being Aboriginal to protect themselves. These feelings and protective behaviours are heavy things to carry, especially in places like schools or shops that should feel safe.

Importantly, there was strength in participants' stories about their experiences with racism. Many participants showed pride in who they are, pushing back against assumptions and reclaiming their identity even when others questioned it. Family played a big role. Caregivers were often the first people participants turned to when things got too much and stepped in when schools or staff did not provide an adequate response. This kind of support mattered and helped participants feel backed up and believed.

These reflections show that Aboriginal adolescents are not just affected by racism, they are thinking about it, managing it, resisting it, and finding ways to hold onto who they are as resistance to racism. Their words are a powerful reminder of the emotional labour adolescents carry and why it important that schools, communities, and services create spaces where Aboriginal identity is seen, respected, and celebrated.

4.4 Relationship to history and policy

To understand the racism that participants reported, we need to look at Australia's history and laws. When the British came to Australia in 1788, they wrongly said the land belonged to no one (terra nullius). This was associated with the taking of land, violence, and trying to erase Aboriginal culture. [29] Aboriginal people were not allowed to speak their language, practice their culture, or live with their families. During the Stolen Generations, from the late 1800s to the 1970s, many Aboriginal children were taken away from their families by the government and church groups. They were incorrectly told their families didn't want them, and many never saw their families again. These children were often hurt, abused, and forced to forget their culture[29, 30]. In Western Australia, a law called the *Aborigines Act 1905* gave the government power to take children away just because of their skin colour. The *Chief Protector of Aborigines* became the legal guardian of all Aboriginal and *"half-caste"* children under 16, even if their parents were alive and caring for them.[30] Here, children's skin colour was used a primary identifier of whether a child could be taken away from their family. At this time, skin colour operated as visual indicator of blood quantum and Aboriginal identity based in a 19th century notion of race. [31] Despite this kind of racist thinking being completely discredited, it continues to have popular appeal, along with other harmful ideas and stereotypes (e.g., 'real' Aboriginals live 'in the bush')[32], which undermine Aboriginal identity and sovereignty. [31] With this recent history in mind, it is clear to see how microaggressions such as asking an Aboriginal adolescent "what percentage Aboriginal" they are or questioning Aboriginal based on skin colour are intimately tied to past forms of racism.

4.5 What were the limitations

The participants in this study were from schools in Perth and the Southwest of Western Australia. Adolescents in remote areas or other parts of Australia might face different types of racism that were not captured here. Second, although the yarning-style focus helped participants feel safe to share, sometimes louder voices can shape the conversation more than quieter ones. Some participants may not have felt comfortable sharing personal or sensitive stories, especially with others around. Also, because the yarning groups happened at school the school environment was an immediate context for participants to draw from. Many stories that participants shared were about microaggressions that happened at school which could explain the high proportion of teachers and classmates being reported as perpetrators.

Third, the activity using microaggression cards only had one example of being treated as a second-class citizen (being hassled in a shop). This might be why that category ended up being combined with the Assumption of Criminality category and we may not have captured all the way that adolescents are treated as second-class citizens. For example, many participants who took part in the 'Busting Stereotypes' workshop after the yarning-style focus groups listed common stereotypes about Aboriginal people which included being alcoholics, drug users, and accessing Centrelink, all of which could underlie microaggressions associated with being treated as a second-class citizen.

4.6 Next steps

The next part of the AAERS study will use Daily Diaries to give a comprehensive picture how racism affects their wellbeing in real-time. Additionally, we will also investigate other research questions that this report has not addressed including how participants in the yarning-style focus groups decided whether certain microaggressions were racist or not. Another important study happening alongside AAERS is the RAAYS Non-Aboriginal Adult Allyship Study (NAAAS). It looks at how adults can be allies, people who stand up against racism and support Aboriginal young people. Findings from the NAAAS study will be used alongside the findings in the current report to support the development of evidence-based anti-racism interventions.

4.7 Recommendations

4.7.1 Recommendations for young people

If you are an Aboriginal adolescent who is experiencing racism remember that it is your choice in how your respond. Taking a moment to choose how you respond to racism can empower you. There are many ways that you can choose to respond, and you can use different ways for different moments. None of these is right or wrong, but what feels best for you in each situation.

Ignore it: it is perfectly okay to ignore someone who is being racist. This can look like walking away from a racist conversation, focusing on something else in the room when someone is being racist or choosing to leave an event or a group chat where racist jokes or images are being shared.

Avoid it: you can avoid situations where you think you are going to experience racism including not looking at comments on social media posts about Aboriginal people and choosing not to be friends with people who say and do racist things.

Acknowledge it: this can occur privately or publicly. It may make you feel better to acknowledge to yourself that you have just seen or experienced racism. It is normal to feel upset, angry, hurt, numb or scared after experiencing racism.

Educate/Re-educate: you do not always have to educate others about racism, and it is not your responsibility to do so. But if you do want to this it involves telling someone who is doing microaggressions why the act is hurtful or offensive. You may want to talk to a trusted adult to ask advice on how to correct and educate people.

Challenge it: this involves asking someone to explain the beliefs and stereotypes which are informing what they say and do and then providing evidence to challenge that stereotype. You may want to talk to a trusted adult about how to challenge racism.

Report it: you do not always have to do something when racism happens, and it may not always be safe for you to do so. If it is safe for you do so you can report it to a trusted adult or report it through an online app such as the Call it Out App.

Celebrate your identity: research shows that one of the best ways to combat the effects of racism is to celebrate your culture and your identity. Here are some social media influencers who you can follow to help you feel deadly!

Braden Hill:
TT@brado87

Vika Mana:
ig@endlessyarning

Inkabee:
ig @ink_abee

Flewnt:
ig@flewnt_mc

Charlotte Allingham:
ig @coffinbirth

Meissa Mason:
ig@coffinbirth
TT@meissa.com.au

Luke Currie-Richardson:
ig@balaluke
TT@thebalaluke

You can also check out the following websites for tips on staying strong:

- There's Nothing Casual About Racism: https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/campaigns/race/theres-nothing-casual-about-racism
- Call it out: https://callitout.com.au/
- 13Yarn: https://www.13yarn.org.au/
- Anti-racism kit: https://www.antiracismkit.com.au/
- Racism no way: https://racismnoway.com.au/
- Well mob: https://wellmob.org.au/
- Altogether now: https://alltogethernow.org.au/racism/reporting-racism/

4.7.2 Recommendations for adults who work with Aboriginal adolescents

Overall, the findings in this report show why schools, communities, and services need to take racism seriously, not just when it happens, but in how they support Aboriginal adolescents afterwards. If you are an adult who works with Aboriginal adolescents, our recommendation to you is clear, acknowledge that racism, in many forms, is happening to Aboriginal adolescents in the places where you work, and it is hurting them. There are several steps you can take to become anti-racist and support Aboriginal young people.
These include:

- Making spaces where Aboriginal identity is respected and visible
- Training teachers to respond properly to reports of racism
- Making sure systems do not ignore racism
- Learn about racism and how it affects adolescents– understand that racism might not always be obvious
- Take the time to self-reflect
- Watch, read and listen to Aboriginal shows, books and music
- Teach others - pass on what you're learning to other people
- Stop racism when you see or hear it
- Report racism when you see or hear it
- For more ways to help support Aboriginal young people, visit the NAAAS report recommendations. There you will find more suggested resources to help.

5

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Appendix A: Full list of microaggressions which were included in study "microaggression cards".

Category	Item	Source
Microinvalidation	Someone told me that they don't see colour.	REMS
	I was told that Aboriginal people do not experience racism anymore	Adapted from REMS
	Someone told me that they don't see race.	REMS
	Someone told me that people should not think about race or cultural differences anymore	Adapted from REMS
	Someone said they do not see race or difference based on people's cultural background	Adapted from REMS
	I was told that I should not complain about race	REMS
	Someone of a different racial group has stated that there is no difference between the two of us.	Adapted from REMS
	Someone said that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people all have the same obstacles/problems to face	Adapted from REMS
	I was told that I complain about race too much.	REMS
	Someone told me that she or he was colour-blind	Adapted from REMS
	A friend joked about the bad treatment of Aboriginal people in Australia.	Adapted from REMS

Category	Item	Source
Assumptions of Similarity/Exoticism	Someone asked me if I eat Kangaroo.	Adapted from REMS
Assumption of Criminality	The police accused me of having or selling drugs	English et al., (2020)
	Someone locked their car doors when they saw me.	English et al., (2020)
	People looked at me like I was a criminal.	English et al., (2020)
	I was watched or followed by a security guard or other workers at the shops.	English et al., (2020)
	Someone crossed the street to walk on the other side.	English et al., (2020)
Microassault	Someone called me bad names.	English et al., (2020)
Assumption of Second-Class Citizenship	I was hassled by a shop worker or security guard.	English et al., (2020)
Assumptions of Intellectual Inferiority	People assumed I am not smart or intelligent.	English et al., (2020)
	A teacher had low expectations of me.	English et al., (2020)
	A teacher treated me like I am not as smart.	English et al., (2020)

Category	Item	Source
Universality of Experience	I was asked to speak for all Aboriginal people during class.	Adapted from English et al., (2020)
	A peer pointed out that I fit into a stereotype about Aboriginal people.	Adapted from English et al., (2020)
	I was mistaken for a different Aboriginal person.	Adapted from English et al., (2020)
	A teacher assumed that I am an expert on Aboriginal people.	Adapted from English et al., (2020)
	A coach used a stereotype about Aboriginal people during a sports game or practice.	Adapted from English et al., (2020)
	A peer assumed I am an expert on Aboriginal people.	Adapted from English et al., (2020)
	I was asked to be a representative of Aboriginal people during a discussion at school.	Adapted from English et al., (2020)
Assumption of Inferior Status	Someone acted as if I am dishonest.	English et al., (2020)
	Someone was surprised I did something well for an Aboriginal person.	Adapted from English et al., (2020)
	I was wrongly disciplined at school.	English et al., (2020)

Category	Item	Source
	I overheard a peer telling a joke about Aboriginal people	English et al., (2020
	Someone questioned my Aboriginality because of how I look	English et al., (2020)
Other	Someone asked if I play the didgeridoo.	Youth Advisory Group
	Someone showed me a racist image online.	Youth Advisory Group
	A peer made a joke about me being Aboriginal.	Youth Advisory Group
	Someone asked me if I am related to a different Aboriginal person.	Youth Advisory Group
	Someone assumed I knew everyone who is Aboriginal.	Youth Advisory Group
	Someone asked me if I live/used to live in the bush	Youth Advisory Group
	Someone asked me “what percentage” Aboriginal I am	Youth Advisory Group
	Someone made a joke about Aboriginal people online	Youth Advisory Group
	I saw a peer being made fun of because they are Aboriginal	Youth Advisory Group
	Someone accused me of stealing	Youth Advisory Group

Category	Item	Source
	I overheard a peer telling a joke about Aboriginal people	Youth Advisory Group
	Someone questioned my Aboriginality because of how I look	Youth Advisory Group
	Someone said I was pretty/good looking "for an Aboriginal"	Youth Advisory Group
	A friend joked about the bad treatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia	Youth Advisory Group
	A peer teased me because of my skin tone	Youth Advisory Group

Note: REMS = Racial Ethnic Microaggression Scale
English D, Lambert SF, Tynes BM, Bowleg L, Zea MC, Howard LC. Daily multidimensional racial discrimination among Black US American adolescents. Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology. 2020 Jan 1;66:101068.

Appendix B: Full list of prompts used in the yarning-style focus groups.

1. **Lay out microaggressions cards, ask students to pick cards that they relate to**

a. Why have they chosen that card? Discuss.

i. Has it happened to you/someone you know? Where did it happen? Who did it?

2. **Ask students to sort the cards into frequency - often, sometimes, never**

a. Discuss - who/where/why?

3. **Introduce the term microaggressions, ask students if they have heard it before**

a. “Microaggressions are the "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioural, or environmental events whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of colour”

b. “What is your personal opinion on what to call these events?”

c. “What are some of the reasons these things happen to you/people your age?”

d. “Would you call any of these events' ‘racism’? If yes, which ones?”

e. Is there anything you would add to this list?

4. **Discuss coping strategies**

a. When things like this happen to you, what do you do?

b. What advice would you give a friend who experienced a microaggression?

c. What have you seen other people do to respond?

Appendix C: Ranking of the frequency of each microaggression example by focus groups.

Frequency	Focus Group						
	FG 1	FG 2	FG 3	FG 4	FG 5	FG 6	FG 7
Happens Often							
A peer assumed I am an expert on Aboriginal people	x	x	x		x	x	N/A
A peer teased me because of my skin tone					x		N/A
A teacher assumed that I am an expert on Aboriginal people		x	x	x	x	x	N/A
Someone called me bad names		x	x		x	x	N/A
I was told that I complain about race/racism too much						x	N/A
Someone told me that they don't see race						x	N/A
Casual racist remarks (self-written)	x				x		N/A
Someone asked me what percentage I am	x	x	x			x	N/A
Someone assumed I knew everyone who is Aboriginal	x	x	x	x		x	N/A
Someone questioned my Aboriginality because of how I look	x	x	x				N/A
Someone asked me if I am related to a different Aboriginal person	x		x	x	x		N/A
The police have accused me of having or selling drugs	x					x	N/A
I was mistaken for a different Aboriginal person	x		x	x			N/A
I was told that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people do not experience racism anymore	x					x	N/A
I overheard a peer telling a joke about Aboriginal people	x	x	x		x	x	N/A
A peer made a joke about me being Aboriginal		x		x		x	N/A
Someone showed me a racist image online		x	x	x	x		N/A
A teacher treated me like I am not as smart						x	N/A
Someone crossed the street to walk on the other side						x	N/A
People assume I am not smart or intelligent				x		x	N/A
Someone asked me if I eat kangaroo		x		x		x	N/A
I was hassled by a shop worker or security guard				x		x	N/A
A coach used a stereotype about Aboriginal people during a sports game or practice			x	x			N/A
Someone acted as if they were better than me			x				N/A
A teacher had low expectations of me						x	N/A
Someone said I was pretty/good looking for an Aboriginal			x			x	N/A
People looked at me like I was a criminal		x					N/A
Someone accused me of stealing		x	x	x		x	N/A
Someone asked me if I play the didgeridoo		x					N/A
Someone made a joke about Aboriginal people online			x				N/A
A peer pointed out that I fit into a stereotype about Aboriginal people	x	x					N/A
I was watched or followed by a security guard or other workers at the shops						x	N/A
I was asked to be a representative of Aboriginal people during a discussion at school						x	N/A

Someone acted as if I am dishonest						x	N/A
The police have accused me of having or selling drugs	x					x	N/A
I was mistaken for a different Aboriginal person	x		x	x			N/A
I was told that Aboriginal people do not experience racism anymore	x					x	N/A
A peer made a joke about me being Aboriginal		x		x		x	N/A
A teacher treated me like I am not as smart						x	N/A
Someone crossed the street to walk on the other side						x	N/A
People assumed I am not smart or intelligent				x		x	N/A
Happens Sometimes							
I was wrongly disciplined at school				x	x		N/A
I was watched or followed by a security guard or other workers at the shops			x	x	x		N/A
A peer pointed out that I fit into a stereotype about Aboriginal people	x				x	x	N/A
Someone asked me what percentage Aboriginal I am					x		N/A
I saw a peer being made fun of because they are Aboriginal	x				x		N/A
I was told that I complain about race/racism too much					x		N/A
I was hassled by a shop worker or security guard			x		x		N/A
I felt out of place in a social situation				x	x	x	N/A
Casual racist remarks (self-written)	x						N/A
I saw a peer being made fun of because they are Aboriginal		x					N/A
A teacher assumed I am an expert on Aboriginal people			x				N/A
A friend joked about the bad treatment of Aboriginal people in Australia	x						N/A
A peer teased my skin because of my skin tone	x			x		x	N/A
Someone accused me of stealing	x						N/A
Someone locked their car doors when they saw me	x	x		x		x	N/A
People assumed I am not smart or intelligent	x	x					N/A
A teacher had low expectations of me	x	x	x	x	x		N/A
I was asked to be a representative of Aboriginal people during a school discussion	x	x	x	x		x	N/A
Someone questioned my Aboriginality because of how I look				x	x	x	N/A
Someone asked me if I am related to a different Aboriginal person					x	x	N/A
I was told that people of all racial groups experience the same obstacles						x	N/A
I was told that Aboriginal people do not experience racism anymore				x			N/A
Someone was surprised I did something well for an Aboriginal person	x			x		x	N/A
Someone made a joke about Aboriginal people online			x			x	N/A
Someone showed me a racist image online						x	N/A

I overheard a peer telling a joke about Aboriginal people			x	x			N/A
Someone acted as if they were better than me	x	x		x	x	x	N/A
People didn't expect me to do well	x		x	x		x	N/A
People looked at me like I was a criminal	x				x		N/A
Someone asked me if I live/used to live in the bush	x	x			x	x	N/A
A peer joked about the negative treatment of Black people in the USA		x	x			x	N/A
A coach used a stereotype about Aboriginal people during a sports game						x	N/A
The police accused me of having/selling drugs		x					N/A
Someone crossed the street to walk on the other side		x		x			N/A
I was mistaken for another Aboriginal person		x	x				N/A
People ask if I can do Aboriginal dance, then make fun of it (self-written)		x					N/A
Getting called names (self-written)	x		x		x		N/A
Someone said I was pretty/good-looking for an Aboriginal		x		x			N/A
Never or Rarely Happens							
Someone told me that people should not think about race or cultural differences anymore.	x			x	x		N/A
The police accused me of having or selling drugs			x	x	x		N/A
I was told that I complain about race/racism too much				x			N/A
Assumed I was good at didgeridoo (self-written)				x			N/A
I was asked to speak for all Aboriginal people during class			x	x	x		N/A
Someone said that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people all have the same obstacles/problems to face				x			N/A
A teacher had low expectations of me / A teacher treated me like I am not as smart	x		x	x			N/A
A friend joked about the bad treatment of Aboriginal people in Australia				x			N/A
A peer pointed out that I fit into a stereotype about Aboriginal people			x	x			N/A
Someone crossed the street to walk on the other side			x		x		N/A
People assume I am not smart or intelligent			x				N/A
Someone said that they are colour blind					x	x	N/A
I felt out of place in a social situation			x				N/A
People didn't expect me to do well					x		N/A
I was told that Aboriginal people do not experience racism anymore					x		N/A
Someone asked me if I eat kangaroo			x				N/A
Someone was surprised that I did something well for an Aboriginal person	x				x		N/A
A coach used a stereotype about Aboriginal people during a sports game	x	x					N/A
I was wrongly disciplined at school	x						N/A

Someone asked me if I like/used to live in the bush	x		x				N/A
Someone showed me a racist image online		x					N/A
Someone acted as if I am dishonest		x					N/A

Note: FG = focus group. The table shows which focus groups placed each microaggression card in the 'Often', 'Sometimes' and 'Never' categories. 'X' indicates that the group placed that card in the associated category. Not all examples from the microaggressions cards were placed in order of frequency by participants.

Appendix D: Full list of microaggression examples; participant quotes

Assumption of Criminality and Second-Class Citizenship
Male: followed by security guard. Male: I can relate. We all can relate.
I walk into shops, any shop – Woolworthss, Red Dot, Kmart – I walk down any aisle, look back, I see someone staring at me and I don't like it.
Me, [name removed] and mum got followed one time in Kmart.
I swear in Woolworthsss they will ring the security guard for them to wait at the front...because every time I walk into Woolworthsss and come out there's like two security guards standing right near.
Then they were just saying like shit, "And you've been stealing this and that" when I haven't.
If you're like walking past the car they automatically think that you're going to try to steal something out of there. Or they call the police or something.
Me and my friends went to the shop alone, and the security guard was watching us.
It happens every time I got to the shops, they always follow me and my friends around.
Someone locked their car doors when they saw me...they probably saw me and was like, "That's a scary fellow."
I'll just walk into a store and see people come into my aisle and pretending to do stuff and just making sure I don't do anything... after you've already said, 'Hello' or something like that, 'No I'm all good' when you first get into the shops, but they keep popping up when you're by yourself at the back, stuff like that.
I'm just walking around either at the shops or just in the streets and people just always eye me off like I'm going to hold them up, like pull a knife out or something like that.
One of my friends, every time she walks into a shop, everyone will stare at here because one of her – her mum's black skinned, but she's still Aboriginal and everyone will just stare at her. Q: Because she's got – A: - darker skin.

Assumption of Criminality and Second-Class Citizenship
This is for my Nan. It wasn't that long ago to be honest. In Reject Shop in [named location] there was an announcement over the PA thingy, and they were like, "We need security in here because there's a black person in the store."
People looked at me like I was criminal.
My brother's friends. They were accused of having substances in their bag and all that, so Monarch (police) searched their stuff, their whole body like a pat down.
I was out with some of my friends and they it was late at night. I had a sleepover there and there was other people and they were all dark skinned so they all asked if they were doing anything illegal. Q: And they were just having a sleepover.. Participant: Yeah. Going down to the shops to get popcorn for a movie.
[At the] check out, so it looks like you're like – are you paying full price? They give you like a look, looking like right here. Q: Yeah. Like you've got something stolen in your jacket? Male: Yeah.
[at the shops] I was doing my own thing but then I heard like the little walkie talkie say – asking where they are.. And then like she comes to ask as we was walking out and she was saying that we're not allowed back in here.... she gave us the dirtiest look up and down, looking here on me everywhere, and goes, "Probably stealing". [name] is like light of skin – and all behind her – and they took note of what we were wearing but never said anything about [name, friend with light skin] never spoke one word to her or anything.
Before you picked up something and they were like, "You need to pay for that."
My dad noticed. They make it obvious. Following you in every aisle? "Yeah okay."
[At shops] when I was done...the security guards came up to me and tried to kick me out because apparently, I was refusing to get my bags searched and everything. And then they tried to ban me for a whole year.
I got angry and the teacher was saying stuff like "Oh, I thought he was going to hit me," and all that stuff.

Assumption of Criminality and Second-Class Citizenship
This one time I was at the shops and my friend had her bag and I had my bag. This person was looking at us and as soon as we dropped the bag he automatically went for my bag and not my and my friend's bag was filled with more stuff than mine. He just took my bag and left it in the toilets...Like my friend's bag, you could see that it had more stuff in it because it was bigger. But automatically went for mine.
They just ask us to leave. I don't know what we did, because they think we are stealing.
I was watched or followed by a security guard or other worker at the shops .... No, it was different shops because there weren't much Aboriginal people around there so it's more – not saying it's a white area but they're – yeah.
I went with my little sister to the toy section in Kmart because she wanted to have toys and we saw this worker and so - they didn't say anything, they just kept following us around the aisles and stuff and when I went - we were about to walk by until they came up and said, "Where are your parents? You're not supposed to be here." It's like, "We're just about to go there." "No, you get out now".
I went to Spotlight to mess around with all the stuff and that, we were playing with masks.That's when we were walking around and that's when one worker started following us and everywhere we went, we always saw her, and she just told us to get out.
They think you stole something, or I don't know, they kind of like yell at you, or try and talk to you privately and that.
I was watched or followed by a security guard or other worker in shops. It happens most times I go to shops.
I was hassled at the shop, but that was like, 'Can I check your bags?' and stuff. They didn't even ask my friends, they just asked me.
I went to near the train station at [shopping centre]. I was with some of my friends, and they were darker skinned, and they got told to open their bag, even though they left it outside.
There was also something that happened...there was two boys. One was a non-Aboriginal and the other was an Aboriginal. They were followed by a security guard and the security guard told them to get out and he went in there with them.
They [friends] were telling me about it. Saying that they got stopped at the little beepers at the shops. They got told they had to search their bags when they leave their bags at the front of the shop, and all that.

Assumption of Criminality and Second-Class Citizenship
I don't know if it's the way I dress or assert myself. I feel like – say a person sees a lion and they see it trying to attack someone, the next time they see a lion they're going to be more cautious about it because they've seen it happen. So, I feel like a person might look at you and be like, 'He might do something to me' because someone of this skin colour or culture's actually done something that has harmed or affected them.
It happened when I was with my uncle....my uncle to the shop and we saw this group of people, all white fellows and then all I saw is them quickly running - because they were in front of us and we were going that way, we were going this way. All we see when we look up is them running across the street and where they were, they stopped, ran. Q: To avoid being near you? Male: Yeah.
So, I've just been walking peacefully, and then I've just seen someone, and they've just looked at me and they walked to the other side of the sidewalk.
That same security guard, he banned me from the shops, like the entire shops ...year because I was with some other mates. Then I got banned because I was friends with them because they did something that I didn't do [anything].
... and then he [teacher] looked at me and he yells at me and tells me to get out, and I was just like – well I got out, and I swore – but I swore at my friend because we were like having a conversation as I was walking out. And then he gave me like this green note. And on the green note, it was like – [name] had called me such and such, was swearing at me calling me these names and these names– I was so confused because I didn't even talk to him when I walked out. I literally just walked out. And then I got subject suspended for like two weeks from that class because of that.
It was maths – not maths, science – and a teacher [inaudible] went outside, so that's what I did. And then these two girls they were my friends, they were in the same class, and they pushed him like from the back. And then when the teacher saw, the teacher was like, "Oh, why did you punch those girls?" And I was like, "I didn't punch them. They pushed me." He was like, "No, I saw you punch them."
My two cousins got accused of stealing at a 7-Eleven in which they weren't.
I was all alone. Then I came back, and the guy yelled out and he's like, "Put that back." I'm like, "I don't have anything." "Yes, you do".
I went to the shops to try to buy something to drink, and the guy thought I stole the money.

Assumption of Criminality and Second-Class Citizenship
Q: Your friend said you stole something? Female: Yeah, but I never did.
This other girl, she was white, I'm not trying to be mean, but she did the wrong thing and I got accused for it by a teacher but it wasn't me.
It could also be getting blamed for something another Aboriginal student has done.
I was wrongly disciplined at school; Female: Yeah...he was just trying to grab a pencil, and they thought he was trying to steal.
Not always at school, but if someone did something wrong and then I usually get blamed for it.... Aboriginal people usually get blamed for it.
One time I accidentally walked out of the store with stuff. I forgot to pay it so I just went back and give it to them. And they said it's all right. When I left someone came up to me and said, "Are you stealing again?" "No, I'm not stealing." And I went, "Why you said again when I haven't been stealing it once?" In my life I haven't stolen anything. I didn't pay for it, I returned it.
Q: Yeah. So, are white kids fighting as well? Female: Hell yeah. Male: Hell yeah, I've seen - Female: Only the black people get blamed.
People assuming that you're a criminal and stealing.
Because they're only doing it to black people. A few times I was with my mate, and we split up and the workers followed me instead of them.
It happens every time I go to the shops, they always follow me and my friends around...and they kick us out sometimes for no reason.
Yeah like at Woollies I bought a drink and then the lady asked to search my bag, and then all these other people walked past and they had stolen something, and she asked to search me and I said, 'What about them?' and she's like, 'No, let me look in your bag' and she snatched my bag.

Assumption of Criminality and Second-Class Citizenship
I never go to Red Dot. Because always at Coles I get followed
One shop that my dad went into and as soon as he walked in they all started following him because he was the only black person in there. It's mostly for the white people and then like a couple of .... They started following him around everywhere
I always go to Red Dot. Two people follow you in that shop. Kmart, just some old white lady.
When someone locks their car doors. After they see like a black person they lock it all the time because they think just because they're black they're going to steal the car
About the sport one I know one of the netball teams they wouldn't let there be an all-Aboriginal team because they said Noongar girls were too violent.
I was watched or followed by a security guard or other worker in shops. It happens most times I go to shops. I don't know if it's the way I present myself or like hold myself and the way I look, or it's just racial stereotypes.

Environmental Microaggressions
[In response to probe about being feeling left out of a social situation] I wish there were more Aboriginal girls.
.. when you play sport people just try and get into your head, and they'll just absolutely hammer you with names.... when they call Aboriginal people names that they hammer it at you, but it feels like they have to actually think of things to tell other people
Someone made a joke about Aboriginal people online.
Q: Someone made a joke about Aboriginal people online? Female: It happens quite a bit – Another Female: Yeah, it definitely comes out a lot around Invasion Day.
I felt out - I felt out of place in..
[in response to one of the interviewers saying she felt out of place]: Q: So, I feel like sometimes it's a bit awkward when you go somewhere and you're the only blackfulla. Female: I get that feeling as well.
It's usually teachers or students that won't - like, if you try to ask them, "Can I play?" they're like, "No." ... "You're black, that's why."
Someone made a joke about Aboriginal people online.
Q: Overheard a peer telling a joke about Aboriginal people... Is that the same as jokes online, or something different? Female: Different.... they have the audacity to say it in front of Aboriginal people.
One time I heard people joking about it at the shops and that.
I saw someone being made fun of because they're Aboriginal.
I saw a peer being made fun of because they're Aboriginal. I saw it one time at the shops. I was walking and then a group of people are just like, "Oh, why do you look like that? What's your family?" stuff like that.

Environmental Microaggressions
[in response to probe about I was asked to speak for all Aboriginal people in class"]. "Like every assembly last year, I was the person to stand up". Note: this could also be considered as an Expectation to be a Cultural Expert.
And then we went to this school in [location] and the little kid looked at this other kid and said, “See, that’s a real Aboriginal.”
Sometimes teachers are mean to me in primary school.
I wish there were more Aboriginal girls.... Yeah sometimes my friends will leave me out
It’s kind of like when you – it’s not meant to be taken racially, it’s meant to be casually.So you could just be talking to one of your friends and they might just say a racist joke and they think it’s funny, but you kind of take it the other way. Note: this could also be considered a Microassault as well as a Invalidation or Negation of Culture/History/Racialised Reality.
Someone showed me a racist image online, They don’t really think, they just think that you’ll find it funny even though it’s someone in your culture that got mad stereotyped.

Assumption of Intellectual Inferiority or Inferior Status
[In response to the probe too pretty to be Aboriginal was at the shops one day and this lady came up to me and she was like, 'Excuse me, you're really beautiful but are you half-caste? Note: This could also be considered a Microassault.
[at netball] Someone acted as if they were better than me.
Q: Someone said I was pretty good-looking for an Aboriginal. That's racism? Male: Yeah....we all look the same...Or we're really dark. And they're saying we don't look good; we all look the same. We all look ugly. ...Because they expect us to all look the same and all look ugly and all that. And they expect us to not grow up in a good environment and have good hygiene and all that.
There's one kid in my class, the teacher was like "Oh you might as well just drop out now because you're never going to get anywhere in life.
I didn't go to the class like three lessons. So my teacher just put me on something different. Like I had to read a book while everyone else was doing work. And when I got back into what everyone else was doing she was like "Do you need help?"
They give you easy work. They give you easy work. And they give all the other people harder work and all that
If you get like an award, they're like shocked.
They think because I'm Aboriginal ...(another participant)...They think we're dumb or something
Male: A kid treated me like I'm not as smart. Q: Has that happened to you or anyone over here? Female: It happens to me all the time in maths and that.
Someone was surprised I did something well for an Aboriginal person. In homework club, one of the teachers was surprised that I was doing, she gave me hard maths puzzles and I could do them.
At school. I get questioned about stuff, and I know a lot about it, and they're surprised that I know.
Probably at the start of the year about that. Like you hopefully have tests and stuff so they can see how actually smart you are. They assume that you're not as smart as everyone else.

Assumption of Intellectual Inferiority of Inferior Status
Probably at the start of the year about that. Like you hopefully have tests and stuff so they can see how actually smart you are. They assume that you're not as smart as everyone else.
People didn't expect me to do too well.
Because everyone thinks – they think you don't have – Aboriginals don't have much education. They think that most Aboriginals just like to go out and all that.
Assumptions of Universal Experience and Perpetuating Stereotypes
My friend posted a TikTok with an Aboriginal girl and they said, 'Is that [name]?' ..just people commented on the TikTok asking if it was me.
When I stayed on my grandad's farm and I came back, and some people when I told them where I'd stayed and they said, 'Oh, you're back in your home' and like, 'Oh, you're probably familiar with that.'
Someone asked me if I eat kangaroo. I feel like this is a common one, like it's just – I don't know. Q: Yeah. Has that happened to anyone else, been asked if you eat kangaroo? Rose, yeah. Female: Yeah. Male: Because we're Aboriginal. Female: I suppose stereotypical that Aboriginal people eat
They expect me to be better at sports because I'm Aboriginal.
Someone asked me if I lived or used to live in the bush...How does it feel to live in the bush? Or how does it feel your people live in the bush?
Ask me to do the Welcome to Country in Noongar, I was like, one, I'm not even Noongar.
They give you words to say but they're in a different – because you know how there's like all different types of indigenous, they ask you to do it in a different type of Indigenous that you aren't
It's like "Can you play the didgeridoo?"
Ask if you can dance...Like "can you do Aboriginal dance?

Assumptions of Universal Experience and Perpetuating Stereotypes
Last year a teacher said to me, we were talking about our holidays, and a teacher asked me out of nowhere if I went down to the bush to see my family.
Someone asked me if I eat kangaroo.
Male: I was mistaken for a different Aboriginal person. Female: Often. Male: Often, yeah. Sometimes...mostly often up in Perth
There's one kid in my class, the teacher was like "Oh you might as well just drop out now because you're never going to get anywhere in life.
I didn't go to the class like three lessons. So my teacher just put me on something different. Like I had to read a book while everyone else was doing work. And when I got back into what everyone else was doing she was like "Do you need help?"
I've got someone asked me if I eat kangaroo.
Someone that's saying I'm really good at didgeridoo. ...And they're saying can you play something for me.
Most people in the school would say, "Hey, do you have a dad?" "Yeah, why?" It's like, "Oh, I thought you didn't have a dad." "Why, is it because I'm black?" "Yeah."
Male: Someone assumed I knew everyone. Male: I can relate... because every white person think I know every Aboriginal. That's true.
I feel like when it comes to Aboriginal people, I feel like people from different races, they don't understand how many actual different tribes and groups there are, so they think when they see an Aboriginal person that they're all related.
Asking if another Aboriginal kid in your year is like your cousin or something like that.
I had one of my friends, their parents worked on the mines or something, and they just asked me if I knew this Aboriginal person and it's like just because I'm Aboriginal doesn't mean I know everyone.

Assumptions of Universal Experience and Perpetuating Stereotypes
Male: Someone asked me if I was related to a different Aboriginal person.
Q: Someone thinking that you know all Aboriginal people around town? Female: Often. Male: Yeah.Well, sometimes. In between.
Whenever we're doing the roll, the teacher will look to me and be like, "Where's this student," another Aboriginal student, expecting me to know. And that happened today. In math, they were like, Miss looked at me, she was like, 'Where's [student's name]?" And only just looking at me, while everyone else was saying that he was on the other side of the class.
I've been noticing that when [student's name] is absent, and then the teacher asks me, "Do you know where [student] is?" Q: Why would they assume that you know? Male: Because we're Aboriginal.
So, it'll be like, 'Do you know this person?' and they just happen to be Aboriginal. And like every single time they ask, 'Do you know this person, do you know this person?' and it's because I'm Aboriginal, you know other people.
If I'm not related to that Aboriginal person they just ask, 'Are you related to this person or that person?' and they'll just be Aboriginal people.
Someone assumed that I knew every Aboriginal because when I was at my old school they used to ask me, "Do you know so-and-so?" Stuff like that...They just assumed that I knew everyone.
Assuming that all Indigenous languages are the same.
"Do you know this guy?" "Like if you have the same last name and you really don't know him."
My friend was like – she's seeing my white friend. She seen me talking to one of my other friends that are black – Aboriginal, and she was like, "Is that your family?" And I was like, "No, they're just my friend." She was just like, "Oh, my bad."

Microassaults
Peer made a joke about being Aboriginal.
That one [security guard] was going off and me and I was like, “Can you get out of my face?”.
Like if you have an argument with someone, “Oh go back where you came from.”
One of the boys called us spear throwers, that’s racist.
Most of the people in my year they called me a ‘boong’ and ‘abo’.
They call me petrol sniffer.
Say the N-word.
Q1: What about a peer pointing out that you fit into a stereotype about Aboriginal people? Male: Yeah, quite a few times like if I’m eating a banana or something.
They call us cotton picker.
Telling a joke about Aboriginal people.
So, then next minute I had the police coming and then they - wait, no. And then the Karen said, “You’re an N-word, of course you have drugs,” and then - she said the legit word. Note: this could also be considered a form of Assumptions of Criminality and Second-Class Citizenship.
I was with my mum, and she went to this meeting … and this white lady walked up to me and said … something about me being Aboriginal and Aboriginal kid death, she was like, “Something, something because you’re Aboriginal,” or whatever.
A peer teased me because of my skin tone - a couple of my friends, a few times, just made fun of me because of my skin colour.
Someone called me a bad name.
Getting name called…really bad stuff. But I'm not going to say it because – yeah.

Microassaults
I was called a monkey. Because I don't even know why. I just get called that for some reason. Just because like - just because of my culture.
There are casual racist jokes, but they don't think it's bad.
We got called an abo. I was with – it was off and another friend and she's Aboriginal as well, and she came up to us and she was like – she was like – "Hi guys. I'm here with my fellow abos."
Someone showed me a racist image online - They'll show a meme of an Aboriginal getting bashed by a white person.
Someone showed me a racist image online - Or people dressing up as Aboriginals as well.
Someone showed me a racist image online-I get sent this one photo of – I don't know, it's not that bad, but just like a dog standing up and said, 'I've had enough of these N word.'
Someone showed me a racist image online which... I have that often.
[in response to picking card about being shown something racist online] It was actually pretty recent, actually like maybe even a month or two ago, and they said, 'Search this thing up', and it's the title of a movie and it's racist.
Q: saw a peer being made fun of because they are Aboriginal? Male: My little brother, it happened to my little brother.

Invalidation or Negation of Culture/History/Racialised Reality
I was told that Aboriginal people do not experience racism anymore.
Q: Someone said that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people have the same obstacles and problems to face. What do we think about that? Male: I don't reckon it's true, because we have to go through racism and that, and we have to go through name – us getting called names and all that.
I've seen that happen. They say when there's Stolen Generation, "Oh, it happened thousands of years ago, let it go." Or like for Australia Day and stuff, when they say, "Let it go, it's just a day".
I'll be like "Oh yeah I eat kangaroo" and they'll be like "Ew that's yuk."
And when you're not looking, they imitate how you dance and all that.
We learn Aboriginal words in Gem class, and then the people who learn them will call us that name.
They mimic throwing a spear at me.
They mimic dances after NAIDOC and stuff.
Two girls got into a fight, and one of them said something and the other said, 'Is it like your ancestors... Didn't your ancestors kill the white people?' and stuff like that.
One of the boys picked up a stick and threw it like a spear and then another kid said, 'Did you catch a kangaroo?'
I reckon people just say like, 'Oh, let's take it back to 100 years ago and see what happened', that type of stuff. Like when you say something it's like it puts them in the wrong and, 'Let's take it back to way back when and see how that happened.'
This one time, I was up in Perth and I had I was sitting on the bench I was eating it [kangaroo] and this man came up to me and was like, "Why are you eating that?" and I'm like, "Because I'm hungry?" He's like, "What is it?" in a disgusted way and I was like, "It's kangaroo." "Ew," and then just walked off.
Q: Okay. So, you were told - so, I was told that I complain about race and racism too much. So, who did that? Female: I don't know, I just thought - it made me think of this one time when - I don't know, it was a long time ago when I was nine or something, four years ago. I can't remember that long.

Invalidation or Negation of Culture/History/Racialised Reality
Mine was I told that I complain about race/racism too much. Like they say, 'If I was in your shoes it wouldn't be that much of a problem to me.' People have told me that.
Male: Yeah, get that sometimes. If they make a joke and I pull them up on it they'll just say, 'Oh well, if I was in your shoes I wouldn't even care if someone made a racist joke.'...It really depends on who the people are. If they're doing it constantly then I they'll think too much on it and be like, 'Oh, you're just complaining about it' – whereas if it's someone like they do it once and you say, 'that's not right, don't do it' and they'll be like, 'Oh my bad, I didn't mean to.' Note: this could also be considered a Microassault or Environmental Microaggression.
There's this girl who reviews makeup things for dark skinned people and in the comments it's just all like, "Oh, you shouldn't be complaining about it. At least they put stuff in there," stuff like that.
Some people, they're just like, "Oh, it's just a joke, bro. Take a chill pill."
And it's really hard to get a job when you're Aboriginal, because most of them don't really like having Aboriginal workers. So, some shops are like really hard to get jobs at.
Yeah, because they think that just because you're Blak you know everything and you've been through all the stuff. Even though it was ages ago.
Cultural Identity Invalidation
Q: Being fair skinned? Male: Yeah, because my cousins are like dark and I'm like white.
What if someone was like, "Oh, you're a little white thing," saying, like – and be like, "Why are you saying that? That's not nice to me." They're like, "Well, why can't you treat us the same way?"
When you're around people they always ... when you say "yes" they don't believe you because your skin tones. Like why we would say yes if we're not?
"What's your percentage?"
They'll be like "Who's Aboriginal on your fa" - like which side of your family is Aboriginal?" Like why you really need to know?

Cultural Identity Invalidation
I just got teased about the colour of my skin, saying that I couldn't be Aboriginal because I was real just got teased about the colour of my skin, saying that I couldn't be Aboriginal because I was really white.
Someone asked me what percentage Aboriginal I am.
People say that they didn't think I was Aboriginal
Sometimes people call me whitewash.
Someone questioned my Aboriginality because of how I look so I've had that happen pretty much all my life from a very young age even in high school by a lot of my friends.They're like, "You're not Aboriginal, you're white.".
Someone asked me what percentage of Aboriginal I am. They actually asked me that.... And people assume you're under 50%, you're not Aboriginal, that's what people assume.
A lot of people ask me, because I don't look it, and because I'm really white. And yeah, they just assume because you're white, you're just not, you're just faking it.
Yeah, just like it happened to me a couple of times, I'm more fair-skinned. Because people really expect blackfullas to look quite different....they expect us to be like real dark skin. Note: this could also be an example of Perpetuating Stereotypes.
Male: Someone questioned my Aboriginality because of how I look. Q: Is that the same as when you are asked how much percent Aboriginal you are? Male: Not really. Because you're questioned if you're whole or you're not.
People when I tell them that I'm Aboriginal they're like, 'Really? That's crazy' because I don't look Aboriginal, I've got white skin, you know, stereotype, 'You should have black, you're Aboriginal.' Note: this could also be an example of Perpetuating Stereotypes.
People say, 'You're not Aboriginal, you have blue eyes and light skin colour.' Especially during the winter because my skin gets fairer, so they go, 'You have blue eyes, light skin and straight hair, you're not Aboriginal' or something like that.

Cultural Identity Invalidation
Someone asked me what my percentage was – my Aboriginal percentage. I was like, "I'm full Aboriginal." I only have a bit of white in me because my mum's dad was white. But the rest of my family is all Aboriginal. People just come up to me like, "Are you fully Aboriginal or are you just like half Aboriginal?"...Yeah, because I'm light skinned. They think I'm white.
Yeah, a lot of people don't think I'm indigenous either because I'm from African descent so then I look more African. So I kind of get that a few times, they ask me, 'Oh I didn't know that you were Indigenous' and stuff like that.
Q: So, someone questioned me about my Aboriginality because of how I looked. Female: This happened to me and my skin friends...But it was by a teacher as well... I got called down here and he asked if we were actually Black or Aboriginal.
Female: And at my old school I didn't really tell anyone that I was Aboriginal, but here they have a whole place....It's just I didn't think I really needed to tell anyone. Because the majority wasn't Aboriginal. One time we had this show thing on stage where we had to do a dance, and then after people started coming up to me and like, "Oh, are you fully -?" I had to tell people about it.
Someone said I'm pretty good looking for an Aboriginal. When they say it it doesn't really hurt, but when you reflect on it later it hurts because it's not just, 'You're good looking', no, it's like, 'You're good looking for an Aboriginal' which like is that what you mean by that. Note: this could also be considered an Assumption of Intellectual Inferiority or Inferior Status.
Assumed Cultural Expertise
When they ask you to speak your own languages. Like we don't get taught to speak our own language. It's not like we're using to doing it.
They're always like "Do you know how to say this word?" or "do you know how to say that word?
My mum's Aboriginal, they asked for her to come and they asked me if I knew anything about bush tucker, so then they asked me to ask my mum to come in.
[in response to a probe about a peer assumed I am an expert on Aboriginal people] Female: Yeah. Second female: Especially in HASS.
Q: Has that ever happened to anyone at the table where someone has said, "Can you represent Aboriginal people?" or you've been asked to do a welcome? Female: Primary school.... primary school was the worst.

Assumed Cultural Expertise
They will assume you're an expert on Aboriginal people, even though you might not even be from there.... They'll just like ask you what the six seasons are, and you won't have any clue.
Some peers just assume that I know like, 'What does this symbol mean?'
Primary school and there were this Aboriginal board thing going on and they asked her to be the head of it because she was Aboriginal.
Q: How often does that happen, teachers assuming that you know everything about being Aboriginal? Female: Hell yeah. Male: I think it was my sub that I had for maths.
They think that just because you're Blak you know everything, and you've been through all the stuff.
They expect you to know – they just don't know, they just don't know about Aboriginal culture and stuff because they're just like, 'Oh well, if you're Aboriginal shouldn't you just know Aboriginal language, because if you're English you know English language.'
A teacher assumed that I am an expert on Aboriginal people. Because people, they will assume you're an expert on... even though you might not even be from there.
It happens when there's assemblies and that, and they will ask you... Or trying to single you out and put you in tough position. Because you want to encourage people that are Aboriginal to actually take it, but also, they're singling you out. Note: this could also be a form of Environmental Microaggression.

RAAYS

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