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# “I Feel Invisible Sometimes”: The Manifestations and Effects of Racism in Social Media Narratives from All-Girls’ Schools in Urban Areas of Central Canada

Joyce Li

2020 saw a rise of social media accounts dedicated to sharing BIPOC students’ experiences with racism at prestigious secondary or post-secondary institutions. Through a narrative analysis of one such account, this study attempts to identify the manifestations of racism in all-girls’ independent schools in urban areas of central Canada. It was found that racism expressed by fellow students tends to be exclusionary, and deprives BIPOC of community and social acceptance; racism expressed by staff and faculty is often dismissive in nature, and damages BIPOC’s faith in their teachers’ ability to provide them with academic and emotional support; and institutional racism limits BIPOC students’ ability to communicate their needs at an administrative level, and denies them the safe and inclusive learning environment they expect their institutions to provide. All three forms of racism stem from the silencing and neglect of BIPOC student voice, which suggests that the prioritization of BIPOC student voice might help address and mitigate racism in these institutions.

*Keywords:* racism, counternarratives, education, social media, independent school, private girls’ school.

## Context

In the summer of 2020, the Black Lives Matter movement saw a resurgence of support in response to the murder of George Floyd (Wortham, 2020). The increased awareness brought on by this resurgence has heightened public discourse surrounding racism internationally, giving many BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour) an opportunity to bring to light the racism they experience on a day-to-day

basis. Their contributions emphasized that although racism does often occur in the form of physical violence, such as police brutality or hate crime, it also impacts victims through racially charged microevents undetected by the bystanders or even perpetrators of racism themselves, as well as discriminatory systemic factors for which no single individual is responsible (Kohli et al., 2017).

In July, an Instagram account was created by an anonymous student. For purposes of anonymization,

the account will be referred to in this paper by the pseudonym “@bipoc\_untold”. Modelled after pages like @blackivystories and @dearpwi, and possibly in response to the growing conversation about racism, @bipoc\_untold was a platform for students of colour attending single-sex schools in a city in central Canada to anonymously share their experiences of racial discrimination. The creator of the account explained that they created the account to uplift the testimonies of students of colour in these local, predominantly White high schools to make students more aware of the behaviors that might harm their BIPOC classmates. The account later began accepting submissions from students from all independent schools across the province.

@bipoc\_untold engages in a practice known as counter-storytelling, a term Solorzano & Yosso (2002) define as “a method of telling stories of those people whose experiences are not often told”. While narratives of dominance, which are narratives that privilege the oppressive group (which, in the case of race and racism, is White people) by “naming [their] social locations as normative points of reference” and neglecting or misrepresenting the perspectives and experiences of the marginalized (Hunn et al., 2006), counter-narratives have been used by critical race theorists to counter the inaccurate or even discriminatory assumptions present in dominant narratives. @bipoc\_untold does this by platforming the narratives of BIPOC students, thereby challenging the predominantly White school population’s perception of BIPOC and their experiences. Many of its posts also give unique insight into the experiences of BIPOC attending single-sex independent schools, especially all-girls’ schools, which were most frequently featured on the account.

Through a mixed-method content analysis of the posts on this page submitted by students from all-girls’ schools, this study aims to identify the manifestations and impacts of racism that BIPOC students experience in all-girls’ schools in urban areas of central Canada. As these all-girl schools begin to implement anti-racist programming into their policies and curricula, an exploration of the different forms and effects of racism can achieve a greater understanding of what needs to be addressed in that programming.

## Literature Review

### Manifestations and Impacts of Racism

A meta-analysis of the peer-reviewed educational scholarship on the subject of racism (Kohli et al., 2017) found that between 2005 and 2015, research in the field of education, particularly that which focuses on K-12 schools, has been lacking in its analysis of mechanisms of racial oppression in educational institutions. Even in research in which racial disparities are mentioned, the oppressive structures that uphold those disparities are frequently left unaddressed, resulting in words like “achievement gap”, “multiculturalism”, and “diversity” being used up to eight times more frequently than references to racism or racist practices. However, in research that does directly address the issue of racism in schools, three main categories emerge: evaded racism, which occurs when discourse about the systemic structures or policies harming people of colour is silenced or invisibilized, both in the classroom and in decision-making spaces; “anti-racist” racism, which manifests in racially inequitable practices that are presented as solutions to racism; and everyday racism, cases in which racism happens on an interpersonal level and is thus unrecognized or dismissed as insignificant.

Evaded racism occurs when schools and educators adopt a colourblind stance when examining racial disparities that may in fact be the result of institutional or systemic racism. Chapman (2013) argues that colourblind ideology sustains and even exacerbates hostile racial climates in the classroom by silencing discussion about racism, thereby normalizing or legitimizing the racism that BIPOC students experience. The effects of evaded racism have a significant impact on the evaluation of school punishment. Several studies have found that students of colour, specifically Black boys and girls, are subject to criminalizing or inferior perceptions by their teachers (Love, 2014), overrepresentation in behavioral infractions (Blake et al., 2011), hypersurveillance (Wun, 2015), and differential punishment (Butler-Barnes et al., 2018), but colourblind ideology allows educators and administrators to view these racial disparities as the result of isolated instances of misbehaviour rather than the consequence of racial profiling or prejudice. Other studies reveal that, in school curricula, the portrayal of historical racial vio-

lence against Black communities and their resistance against it are portrayed as individual incidents rather than a pattern of systemic oppression (Chandler & McKnight, 2009; Brown & Brown, 2010). Rather than promoting equity, the evaded racism of colourblind ideology serves to erase the oppression that BIPOC communities experience.

'Anti-racist' racism can be present in institutions' attempts to highlight diversity or multiculturalism in underdeveloped ways. For instance, Doucet & Adair (2013) note that classrooms almost always promote the food, clothing, and holidays of middle-class White people, so on the rare occasions that elements from other cultures are given attention, it results not in the diversification of the histories and perspectives woven into the school's culture, but the alienation of 'other' communities as the student body pauses to consider how the spotlighted culture differs from 'the norm.' When practiced alongside colourblind ideology, multicultural curricula merely reasserts racial hierarchies, as it lacks the awareness of how racially marginalized communities came to be marginalized (Bery, 2014). As well, in light of the increase in social media activism in 2020, Potts (2020) observes that much of 'anti-racist' online media prioritizes externalizing racism and separating oneself from the 'bad Whites' over actually advocating for the rights of BIPOC or educating oneself or others about BIPOC issues, rendering the media performative and ineffective. By implementing 'solutions' that only further perpetuate racism, 'anti-racist' racism serves as a way of covering up existing issues.

Everyday racism is the most common, nuanced, and universal form of racism experienced by BIPOC (Kohli et al., 2017), and can manifest in both overt and subtle ways. Sue et al. (2007) use the term "microaggression" to refer to everyday racism and defines three subcategories that fall under this label: microassault, nonviolent but purposeful discriminatory actions; microinsult, unintentional behaviour that demeans a person's racial or ethnic identity through rudeness or insensitivity; and microinvalidation, communications that negate, exclude, or dismiss the lived experiences of BIPOC. The literature shows that BIPOC students of different racial backgrounds have all experienced microaggressions from classmates and faculty alike (Kohli et al., 2017), but because of their frequency and often innocuous nature, microaggressions are often

normalized or left unaddressed in institutions (Lewis, 2003), despite the detrimental impacts victims of continuous microaggression can experience, including self-doubt, frustration, and isolation (Solorzano et al., 2000), and even depression, anxiety, or trauma that results in internalized racism (Nadal et al., 2014).

Overall, the various studies provide an extensive outline of the different forms of racism that can take place in an institution, as well as several factors that perpetuate or exacerbate that racism. This current study will attempt to identify and analyze these forms of racism in the student narratives of the social media sample, and uncover more specific subcategories within the forms of racism established in the literature. By focusing on all BIPOC in a predominantly female setting, it also aims to fill in a gap in the research, the majority of which focuses on the racism experienced by Black male students (Kohli et al., 2017).

### Women and Racism

To approach the examination of racism in a predominantly female setting, it is necessary to first study the literature relating women and racism, both as recipients and perpetrators. While there is a small but substantial amount of research about the ways in which women, specifically young Black women, experience racism, research focused on women as perpetrators of racism is sparse.

Although male and female BIPOC certainly experience racism similarly in many aspects, BIPOC women also experience the additional effects of sexism, as well as pressure to fulfill traditional gender roles. An analysis of interviews with eleven Black girls (Eggelston & Miranda, 2009) attending a predominantly White school reveals that, in response to the stereotype that Black girls typically exhibit 'unfeminine' traits like being "loud and obnoxious", the interviewees felt the need to be "silent" and avoid calling attention to themselves. They also often distanced themselves from other Black girls who did not attempt to assimilate to avoid being assigned the label attributed to their racial-gender group. The same study found that Black girls who felt alienated by their classmates might also behave in the opposite way—by embodying the stereotype, or further distancing themselves from the rest of the school. Both responses limit students' high school experiences and can result in lower

academic achievement. In a similar study, this one based on interviews with twenty Black girls attending two diverse (not predominantly White) schools (Joseph et al., 2016), interviewees reported being punished for dress-code violations more frequently than their non-Black female classmates (possibly due to the stereotype of Black women being more sexually promiscuous) and noticed that their teachers seemed to have lower expectations for Black girls. These interviewees differed from the previous in that in addition to countering or embodying stereotypes in response to racism, they also stood up for themselves and others or planned for academic success despite barriers, suggesting that greater racial diversity in student populations enable BIPOC students to maintain their dignity and succeed academically despite experiencing racism.

Research about women as perpetrators of racism has focused more on White women's racial attitudes rather than the ways they express those attitudes, and the studies that exist offer inconsistent conclusions. A 2003 article by Hughes & Tuch observed that women showed no significant differences from men in their opinions on stereotypes, socioeconomic disparities, and policies associated with Black people, leading the researchers to theorize that, in the context of racial discourse, White women identify more strongly with their status as White people than with the values of empathy and 'other-focused-ness' that they are conditioned by society to uphold. However, another study published that same year (Ekehammer et al., 2003) reported that women consistently showed greater implicit bias in a series of experiments, although men displayed greater explicit bias. Yet another study conducted in 2012 (Spanierman et al.) found that women are more likely to exhibit aspects of a desirable, anti-racist racial affect type than men, and are consequently more likely to support policies that benefit BIPOC.

The goal of the present study is to achieve a better understanding of both how female students express racism, and how female BIPOC students are affected by that racism, through the accounts of those female BIPOC students in predominantly female institutions. This increased understanding may offer greater insight into how institutions can identify and address this 'girl-on-girl racism' and aid BIPOC students in responding to that racism in ways that allow them to succeed socially and academically.

## Method

To explore the various manifestations and effects of racism in all-girls' schools, a thematic analysis was conducted on the posts on @bipoc\_untold. The use of counter-narratives in research concerning racism and social justice helps researchers avoid deficit narratives about BIPOC perpetuated by a colourblind narrative as well as ground their research in the experiences of people of colour (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Although other counter-narrative research conducted on racism in education generally obtains counter-narratives through interviews, this study's use of social media narratives allows for a larger data sample and an exploration of a new kind of counter-storytelling.

@bipoc\_untold is part of a greater anti-racist social media movement known as the "Blackat" movement, which refers to a growing number of Instagram accounts, many of them following the naming format of "Blackat[school name]", dedicated to sharing BIPOC experiences of racism in private schools. The movement aims to challenge the narrative that BIPOC can escape the impact of racism by going to private schools, as well as point out the performative or ineffectual nature of their schools' diversity initiatives, and to push for more substantial action on the part of their schools (Spencer, 2020). This goal is closely consistent with the goal of counter-storytelling, which Solorzano & Yosso (2002) state is to "challenge the dominant discourse on race and further the struggle for racial reform"—perhaps even more so than an interview, as students are aware that they are engaging in counter-storytelling when posting to a Blackat page. In using the posts of @bipoc\_untold in its analysis, this study examines the stories BIPOC students most want to tell.

Although there is no way of verifying the legitimacy of these student narratives, the administrators of @bipoc\_untold remove posts that are identified by students to be factually inaccurate. Therefore, this study operates under the assumption that all posts still available on the page accurately present BIPOC students' perceptions of racism that they truly experienced. As well, because @bipoc\_untold posts seek more to expose racist behavior than to unpack how the victim was affected, particularly in the long term, the narratives analyzed may offer insufficient insight on the effects of racism. Because this research studied

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Table 1: Types and Effects of Racism

Category	Subcategories
Microassaults	Explicitly racist remarks Ridicule of BIPOC culture (malicious)
Microinsults	Ridicule of BIPOC culture (ignorant) Exclusion Racial stereotyping Eurocentric beauty standards Denying individuality Double standards
Microinvalidations	Denying/justifying racism Cultural appropriation Perpetual foreigner stereotype Use of racial slurs Tone/reaction policing

counternarratives retrospectively, queries that arose during the analysis regarding the events described in these narratives could not be answered or clarified.

This study focuses on posts concerning four all-girls' schools uploaded between the account's creation in July and the beginning of the 2020-21 school year in September. These posts were sorted by the perpetrator(s) of racism mentioned—either students, teachers, or institutions—then into categories found in previous literature on racism in K-12 schools: microassaults, microinsults, microinvalidations, evaded racism, and anti-racist racism. Then, following the thematic analysis procedure as described by Braun and Clarke (2006), codes—any illuminating features identified in the narrative—were generated. The narratives within each category were thematically analyzed twice using this method: once focusing on manifestations of racism, with the goal of identifying more specific subcategories that define common themes across the narratives in each category; and once focusing on the effects of racism, with the goal

of identifying common ways students are impacted by the racism described in each category. The codes were then sorted into overarching themes, which were then reviewed and defined.

## Results

Of the narratives posted to @bipoc\_untold (as of February 23rd), 139 were submitted by students from all-girls' schools within the relevant time range. Of these posts, 132 underwent the coding process, while 7 were eliminated for offering insufficient information about the nature of the racism the author experienced. For example, one student discusses in detail the way the racism they experienced affected them, describing the lasting trauma it caused and the lack of support they received. However, because they never describe or give examples of the racism they faced, this narrative was not classifiable, and thus was eliminated.

Of the narratives that were analyzed, students

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Evaded Racism	Avoiding conversations about racism Ignoring racism Lack of antiracist education Lack of consequences for racism Prioritizing White comfort
“Antiracist” Racism	Selective activism White saviorism Tokenization Mishandled antiracist lesson material Mishandled antiracist initiatives
Effects	Desire to assimilate Loneliness/alienation Indignation Shame Wishing peers were more educated Regret for not confronting perpetrator Long-term insecurity Loss of trust Academic consequences Feeling devalued Stress/emotional exhaustion Disappointment Discouragement

were responsible for 53.0% of the instances of racism, staff or faculty caused 33.3%, and institutions caused 13.6%. Of the narratives related to students, 18.5% were classified as microassaults, 54.2% as microinsults, 20.0% as microinvalidations, and 7.1% as “antiracist” racism. Of those related to teachers, none were microassaults, 54.5% were classified as microinsults, 13.6% as microinvalidations, 22.7% as evaded racism,

and 9.1% as “antiracist” racism. Finally, of posts related to the institution, 33.3% were classified evaded racism, and 66.6% as “antiracist” racism. Table 1 provides a list of the more specific manifestations and effects of racism observed during the coding process. Because none of the effects of racism are exclusive to a category, they are not sorted by category. Definitions of the codes are included in the appendix.

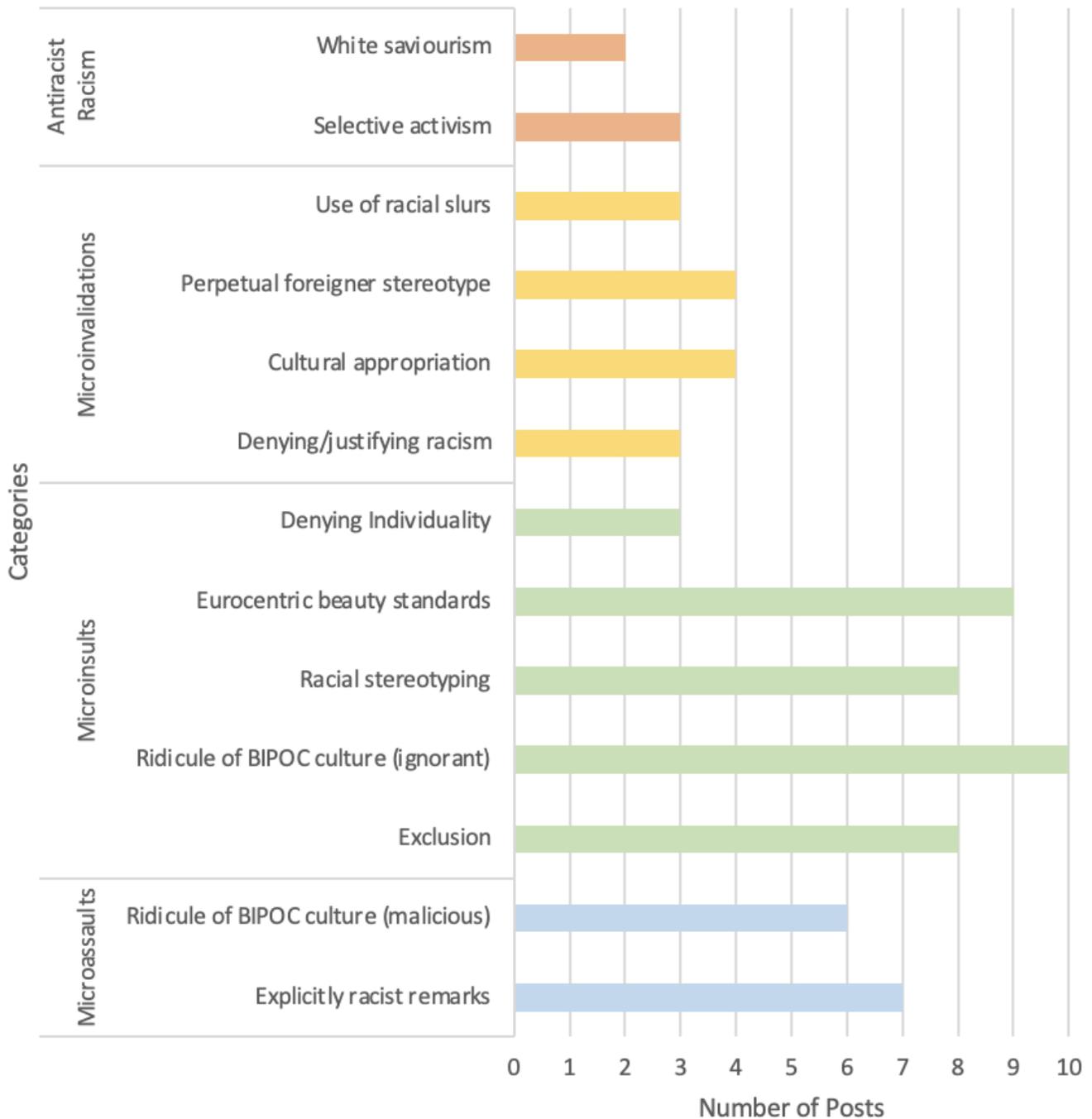
## MANIFESTATIONS AND EFFECTS OF RACISM IN SOCIAL MEDIA NARRATIVES

Figure 1 depicts the frequency of each specific type of racism carried out by students. Within each category, the subcategories were generally similarly frequent, with the exception of the microinsult category, in which the theme of denying individuality was significantly less frequent than the other subcategories.

Figure 2 indicates the frequency of each way in which BIPOC were affected by racism from fellow students, sorted by category. Note that not every narra-

tive described how the author was affected by racism, and some narratives mentioned more than one effect. Loneliness/alienation and indignation appeared in all four categories of racism, whereas shame, long-term insecurity, wishing peers were more educated, and regret for not confronting the perpetrator were unique to the microinsult category. A notable observation not shown in the graph is that all five mentions of long-term insecurity were found in narratives about Euro-

Figure 1: Frequency of Specific Types of Student Racism



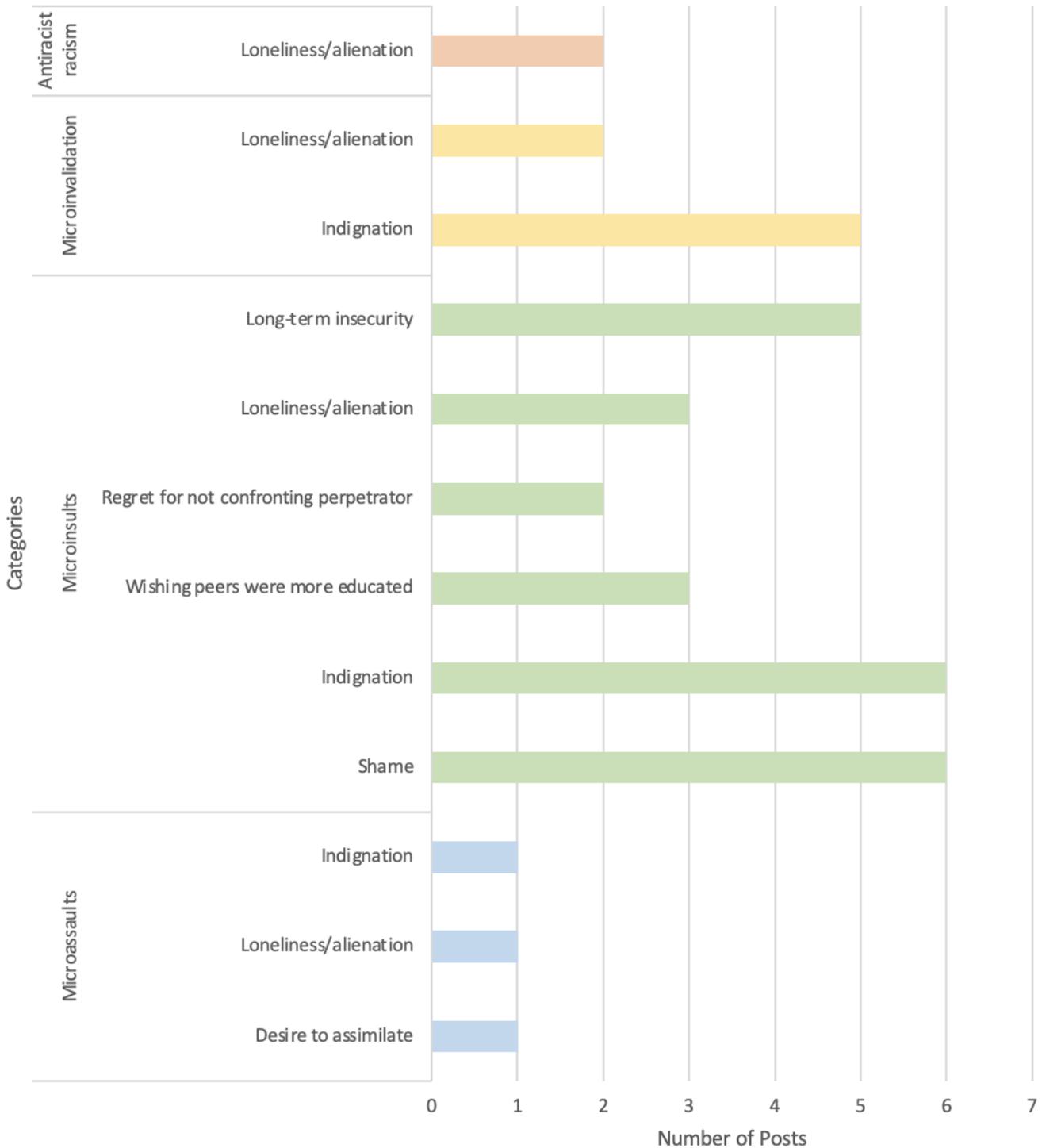
## MANIFESTATIONS AND EFFECTS OF RACISM IN SOCIAL MEDIA NARRATIVES

centric beauty standards.

Figure 3 shows the frequency of each subcategory of racist behavior exhibited by staff and faculty. In the microinsult category, the denial of individuality was by far the most common, followed by racial stereotyp-

ing. The narratives in both the microinvalidation and evaded racism category were evenly split between two subcategories. Finally, the “antiracist” racism category consisted mostly of the mishandling of antiracist lesson material with one instance of tokenization.

Figure 2: Frequency of the Effects of Student Racism

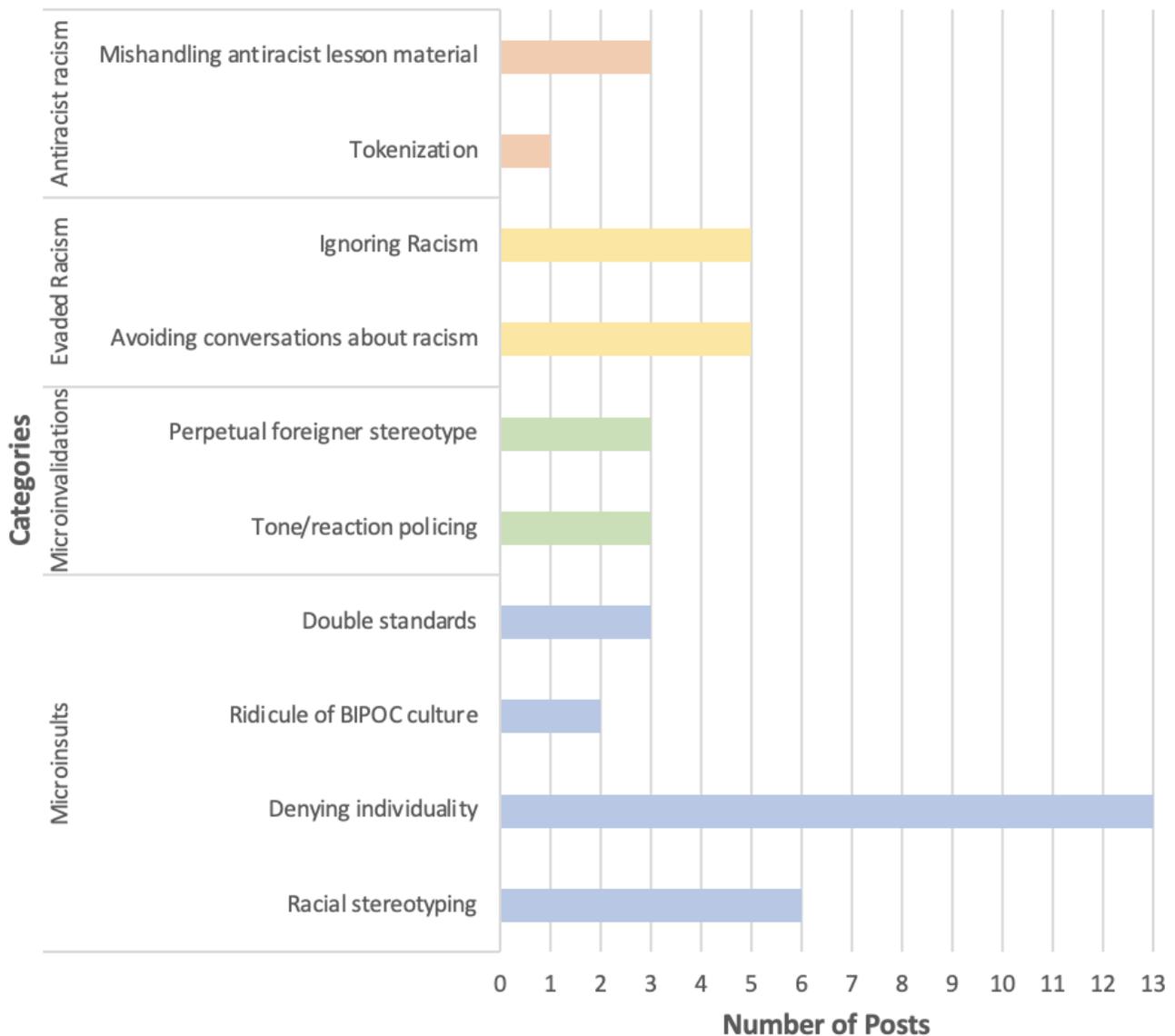


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Figure 4 presents the frequency of the ways in which students were affected by the racist behavior of the staff and faculty. Some effects were observed in two categories: the loss of trust was found in both microinsult and microinvalidation narratives, as was stress/emotional exhaustion; narratives about feeling devalued were found in both the microinsult and evaded racism category. Indignation and academic consequences were unique to the microinsult category, and disappointment was unique to the evaded racism category. It happens that the narratives in the “antiracist” racism category did not describe how the authors were affected, but this does not necessarily mean that students were not affected by these incidents.

Moving onto the final set of data, Figure 5 illustrates the frequency of specific types of racism exhibited by institutions. Within both categories, the subcategories never differed from one another by more than two posts, with the lack of consequences for racism as the most frequent subcategory of evaded racism and tokenization as that of antiracist racism.

Figure 3: Frequency of Specific Types of Staff/Faculty Racism



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Figure 4: The Frequency of the Effects of Staff/Faculty Racism

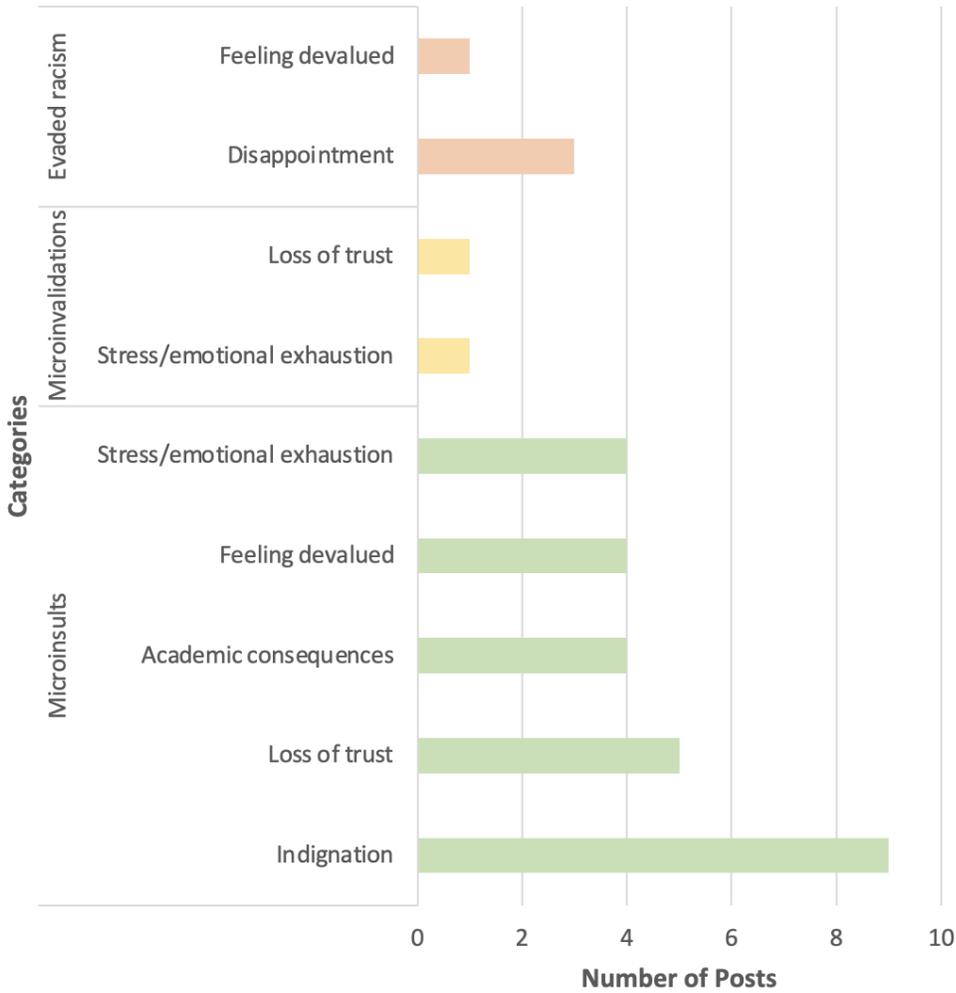


Figure 5: Frequency of Types of Institutional Racism

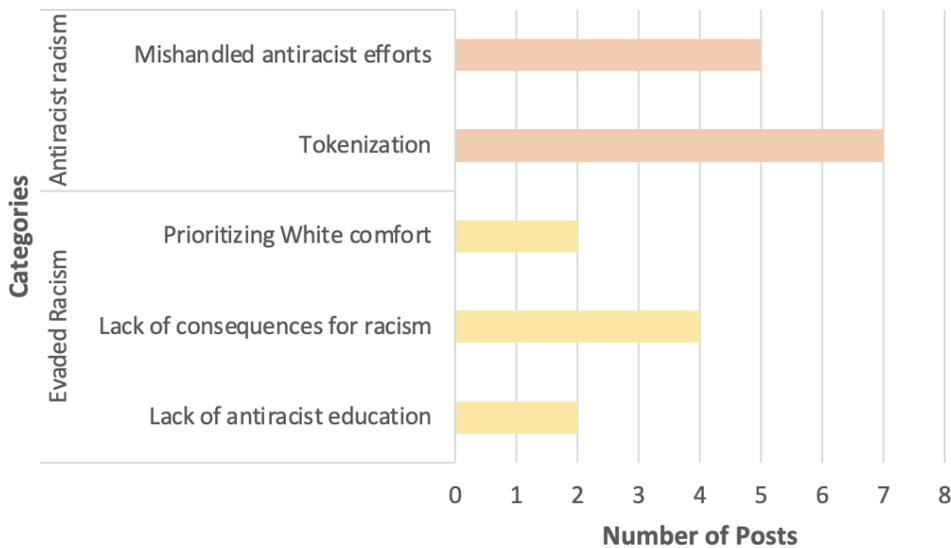


Figure 6: Frequency of Effects of Institutional Racism

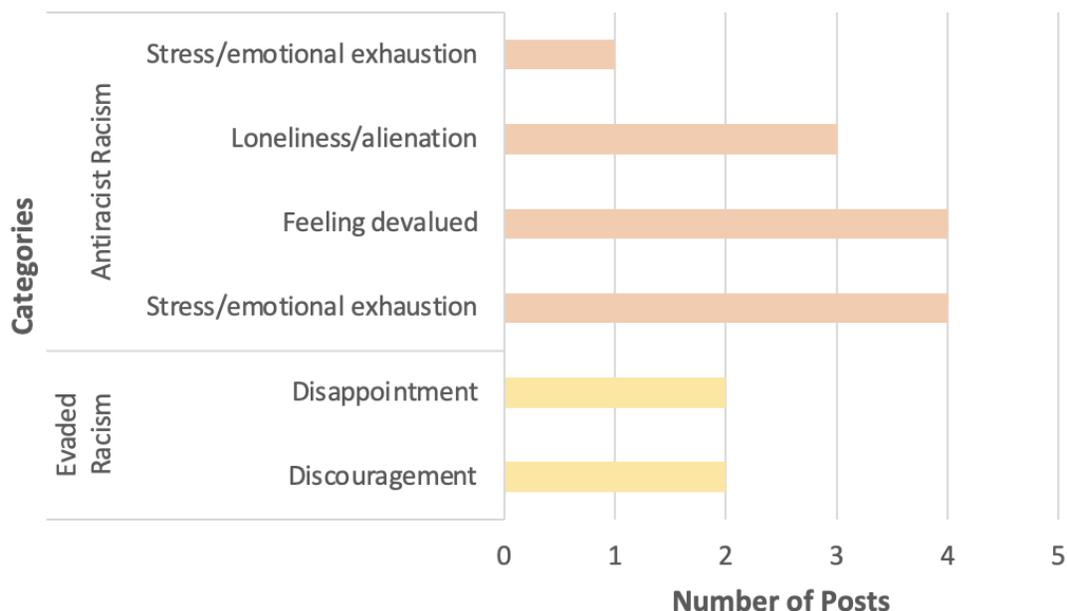


Figure 6 shows the frequency of the effects of institutional racism observed in the student narratives. The effects of the two categories of racism were distinct: evaded racism caused students to feel discouraged or disappointed, while “antiracist” racism made students feel stressed, devalued, and alienated.

## Discussion

### Student Racism

To identify the themes found in narratives about student racism, it is crucial to recognize the role that the students play in one’s overall experience at school. The student body is the primary source of community, recognition, and social acceptance for any student, and the racism of students often has the effect of depriving BIPOC of those very elements. It is necessary to examine not only the individual categories of racism, but the way in which they interact with one another.

Microinsults were the most commonly identified category of student racism, and can be split into the categories of exclusion, racial stereotyping, Eurocentric beauty standards, the denial of individuality, and the ignorant ridicule of BIPOC culture. Due to the nature of microinsults, it can be assumed that these

behaviors were not intentionally racist, but they still might have been deliberate in other ways. For example, the narratives in the exclusion category described BIPOC being rejected from friend groups, ignored at icebreaker events, or treated dismissively during everyday interactions. Most of these cases seem like deliberate acts of exclusion, which, though not inherently racist, reveal the implicit racial bias of the student body when one considers how frequently it happens to BIPOC students. As a result, BIPOC students described feeling shame in addition to alienation; they were able to make the connection between their exclusion from the school community and their race.

Compared to exclusion, the other microinsult sub-categories have more explicit connections to racial bias, each drawing negative attention to aspects of BIPOC students that distinguish them from their White peers, whether it be their culture, their appearance, or the stereotypes tied to their race. But although BIPOC can easily pick up on the offensive aspects of racial microinsults, they are also aware that their White peers would not recognize the significance of their actions. Some narratives described microinsults in the form of genuine questions: BIPOC were asked whether they were related to other students of the same race, or if their parents were low-income. Others described microinsults intended as compliments: particularly common in the category of Eurocentric beauty stan-

dards, BIPOC were told they were pretty “for their race”, and Black students in particular were told they looked better with straightened hair. Because of the well-meaning nature of these microinsults, BIPOC did not react with indignation, but rather internalized those comments and developed lasting insecurities about their appearance. Even microinsults that clearly express negative sentiments, such as calling the food, clothing, or practices of a culture “gross” or “weird”, show a lack of exposure to those cultures rather than malice towards them. Although isolated instances of microinsults seem relatively trivial, the accumulation of unintentional racism creates a deeply alienating environment for BIPOC students, and deals significant damage to their self-esteem.

The microinvalidation category describes situations in which BIPOC felt that their experiences—mostly those related to racism—were being negated. In some cases, their peers outright denied the presence of racism, often arguing that BIPOC were overreacting. In other cases, specifically of cultural appropriation and the use of racial slurs, BIPOC were invalidated by White peers’ adoption of things related to their experiences of oppression. In all four posts about cultural appropriation, the authors contrasted their past experiences of being bullied for elements of their culture with their peers’ current appropriation of those same elements to show the injustice of the situation. In narratives about racial slurs, the authors were similarly upset by their classmates’ casual adoption of derogatory epithets that were not theirs to reclaim. Generally, microinvalidations communicate indifference to the lived experiences of BIPOC. Although the narratives do not state this directly, it is possible that microinvalidations discouraged BIPOC from voicing their concerns about racism.

The significance of the narratives in the microassault category lies in the fact that the explicitly racist remarks were all overheard by BIPOC rather than directed at them, whereas the malicious ridicule of BIPOC culture were all described as “normalized” or something that “everyone was engaging in”. The narratives in the microinvalidation category establish that the greater student body is indifferent to BIPOC experiences, which allows for misconceptions about BIPOC culture to perpetuate. For example, students felt comfortable engaging in comments implying that Chinese people eating “bat soup” were responsible for

starting the COVID-19 virus because they did not listen to the Chinese students speaking out against such comments. Meanwhile, narratives in the microinsult category establish that BIPOC are often alienated or separated from the White student body, which creates private social spaces in which White students can engage in explicitly racist remarks amongst themselves, such as “I’m allergic to Asians”, without being confronted by the BIPOC that such comments target. In both cases, subtler forms of racism, when left unchecked, paved the way for the expression of more explicit forms of racism.

Finally, narratives in the “antiracist” racism category reveal that BIPOC students can recognize the performative nature of their classmates’ allyship. In one post, a Black student recounts how, during the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement, White students she rarely spoke to would send her texts like “black is beautiful” or “we stand with you” out of the blue. When White students who rarely interact with BIPOC classmates engage in antiracist activism or attempt to present themselves as allies, BIPOC recognize the hypocrisy of their actions, and only feel further alienated and “singled out”.

Overall, the racism that BIPOC students experience from fellow students is either exclusionary in nature, or the product of exclusion. Deprived of community and social acceptance in the greater student body, they are unable to educate their peers about their unintentionally racist behaviors. This in turn further alienates BIPOC in a self-perpetuating cycle.

### Staff/Faculty Racism

Similarly to student racism, the types of racism BIPOC students experience from staff and faculty directly correspond to the role that staff are meant to play in a student’s school experience. Students look to their teachers for knowledge, positive reinforcement, and both academic and emotional support, and when teachers exhibit racist behavior, it communicates to BIPOC that the teacher cannot provide these things.

Once again, microinsults were the most frequently reported type of racism shown by teachers. Students most commonly responded to microinsults with indignation, but different subcategories of microinsults also had different additional effects on victims. The most frequent subcategory was the denial of individuality.

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Narratives in this category mainly described teachers continuously mixing up BIPOC students of the same race or forgetting their names entirely. Such actions show that a teacher does not pay the same amount of attention to BIPOC as they do White students, and may communicate to BIPOC that their teacher perceives them as interchangeable with other students of the same race. As a result, students mentioned that, in addition to anger and annoyance, they felt devalued, or lost trust in their teacher. Because their teacher does not appear to see them as an individual, a BIPOC student would likely lose faith in the ability of that teacher to provide them with individualized support.

Interestingly, several students also mentioned feeling emotionally exhausted by this type of microinsult, brought on by having to constantly correct their teacher. This effect brings to attention a teacher's position of authority, which can make any confrontation with them feel like a stressful situation. This dynamic may also contribute to other microinsults expressed by teachers, specifically the perpetuation of racial stereotypes and the ignorant ridicule of BIPOC cultures. Though the students reporting these microinsults were aware that their teachers hadn't intended to offend anyone, they still described feeling indignant and losing trust. BIPOC students expect their teachers to know better than their peers, and grow to mistrust them as educators when they do exhibit racist behaviors.

A few BIPOC students also reported that they were graded more harshly or surveilled more closely than their White peers, likely due to the racial bias of staff or faculty members. Although the available posts do not offer enough evidence to fully confirm these claims, such experiences were echoed by BIPOC interviewees in other studies (Joseph et al., 2016). The authors of these posts did not mention how they were affected emotionally, but they mentioned that they suffered academically due to their teachers' prejudices, which may have led to further mistrust of their teachers as educators.

Narratives about microinvalidations and evaded racism were similar in that staff preferred not to address issues concerning race. The main difference between the two categories is that microinvalidations occur when a student voices their concerns and is shut down by a staff member, whereas evaded racism occurs when a staff member turns a blind eye to an issue that should have been addressed or an opportunity to

teach about racism. As such, the victims of microinvalidations described feeling emotionally exhausted and losing trust, whereas victims of evaded racism described feeling disappointed and devalued. In both cases, by not educating students about racism, staff and faculty members are failing both as educators and as supporters of BIPOC students.

Finally, the "antiracist" racism category of faculty racism consists of a few narratives about mishandled antiracist lesson material, in which teachers inadvertently engaged in racist behaviors (e.g. saying a racial slur) while teaching about a lesson meant to address racism, as well as one case of tokenism, in which a teacher was reported to repeatedly harass BIPOC students into participating in a diversity committee despite their lack of interest. None of the authors of these posts mentioned how they were affected by these actions, and they can be better understood as consequences of institutional racism, which will be discussed in the next section, rather than cases of interpersonal racism.

Altogether, the racism of staff and faculty undermine their ability to earn the trust of BIPOC students, foster personal connections with them, and create a safe learning environment for them. When this kind of racism occurs, BIPOC are deprived of the educational experience that their White peers receive, which causes them to feel let down by those responsible for their education.

### **Institutional Racism**

Unlike the interpersonal racism shown by students and staff, institutional racism rarely occurs as isolated incidents; rather, it is a product of policies and practices within a school. This may be the reason there were significantly fewer narratives in this category: singular instances of racism are likely more memorable and discernable than ongoing practices. Nevertheless, in the narratives that do exist, students were able to identify both specific instances that illustrate their institution's racism and continuous actions (or lack thereof) that perpetuate a racist environment. Students expected their institution to provide a safe and inclusive learning environment for BIPOC, and the narratives show how schools failed to do so.

The evaded racism category consisted mostly not of incidents that occurred, but elements that students

wished their school had implemented, or actions they wished their school had taken. They called for more diversity in the school's curriculum and programming, as well as more defined or severe consequences for racist behavior, with some students pointing out their school's prioritization of the comfort of their White students over the implementation of such elements. Evaded racism left students feeling disappointed and discouraged from reporting future instances of racism, as they believed the school would not take effective action.

Narratives in the "antiracist" racism category discussed efforts the school had taken to combat racism or promote diversity, and how such efforts instead negatively impacted BIPOC students. In the mishandled antiracist efforts subcategory, students mentioned that attempts to diversify the curriculum often centered exclusively on media portraying BIPOC in situations of oppression, promoting a one-sided view of non-White characters. In the tokenization category, BIPOC students reported that they were often asked to sacrifice their time and energy to participate in diversity campaigns despite their lack of interest. "Antiracist" racism often involves BIPOC emotional labour, leading to emotional exhaustion, but BIPOC also reported feeling devalued and alienated, as this sort of racism communicates that their school is unaware or not listening to their actual needs.

On the whole, institutional racism occurs when BIPOC voices are not heard at an administrative level, leaving institutions unaware of the needs of their BIPOC students or how to best fulfill them.

## Conclusion

Many aspects of this study's findings coincide with those in the literature: various types of microaggressions, evaded racism, and antiracist racism were all found in the data collected for this study, as were more specific manifestations of racism, such as racial stereotyping and oversurveillance. Narratives about student racism reveal that the White girls at the examined schools tend not to direct explicit racism towards BIPOC, but many still harbour implicit biases that their BIPOC peers can identify. This is largely consistent with the literature about women as perpetrators of racism, though those studies aren't entirely conclusive.

To address the initial purpose of this study, both the types and effects of racism at all-girls' independent schools in urban areas of central Canada are varied, but similarities can be identified across narratives featuring the same perpetrators of racism. Student racism tends to be that which alienates BIPOC from the school community and robs them of the recognition of their peers; the racism of staff and faculty communicates negligence and undermines their role as BIPOC students' source of support; and institutional racism reveals a lack of awareness of or interest in the needs of BIPOC students. Overall, racism in all-girls' schools, both interpersonal and systemic, work to create a culture and environment that deprives BIPOC students of the essential elements of a positive school experience. The implications of this study are critical, as they provide the multidimensional insight that institutions might need to address racism at its source—or many sources. The recognition of the pervasive and insidious nature of racism, and the way in which it affects all aspects of BIPOC students' school experience, is crucial in illustrating the importance of the adoption of better antiracist measures: both solutions and continuous practices that prioritize BIPOC student voice.

There are some aspects of this study that require further research. As previously mentioned, the narratives in the data sample offer limited insight, particularly regarding the effects of racism. In several subcategories, inferences had to be made about how students might have been affected by the racism they experienced, as it was not stated in the relevant narratives. Furthermore, due to the subtler and less anecdotal nature of institutional racism, the data sample contained fewer narratives in this category, making it more difficult to draw conclusions about this sort of racism. Future studies might overcome these limitations by collecting a larger data sample, using more accounts like @bipoc\_untold over a greater timeframe. Finally, any effects of personal bias could be avoided in future studies by employing two or more independent researchers and establishing intercoder reliability by comparing their conclusions. @bipoc\_untold is only a small window to the experiences of BIPOC, and at its core, this study seeks to build a foundation for future research and analysis of the much greater body of information provided by the growing phenomenon of social media counter-storytelling.

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## Appendix

### Definitions of Types of Racism

Category	Subcategory	Definition
Microassaults	Explicitly racist remarks	Statements or actions that communicate undisguised hatred or disgust towards a racial community.
	Ridicule of BIPOC culture (malicious)	Intentional degradation or antagonization of BIPOC communities through the mockery of cultural elements (eg. language, food, clothing, traditional practices)
Microinsults	Ridicule of BIPOC culture (ignorant)	Statements or actions that unintentionally insult the cultural elements (eg. language, food, clothing, traditional practices) of BIPOC communities
	Exclusion	Actions or statements that prohibit or reject BIPOC from spaces or communities in the school
	Racial stereotyping	Statements or actions that perpetuate stereotypes about racial or ethnic groups
	Eurocentric beauty standards	Statements that imply that physical features associated with BIPOC are less attractive than those associated with White people
	Denying individuality	The treatment of BIPOC students as a collective rather than distinct individuals
	Double standards	Grading or disciplinary patterns that put BIPOC students at a disadvantage

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Microinvalidations	Denying/justifying racism	The negation or reinterpretation of BIPOC complaints of racism
	Cultural appropriation	Inappropriate adoption of cultural elements of BIPOC communities
	Perpetual foreigner stereotype	The perpetuation of the perception of BIPOC as foreigners; the negation of their identity as Canadians
	Use of racial slurs	The casual use of derogatory epithets that are or have been used to degrade BIPOC
	Tone/reaction policing	Criticizing victims of racism for their reaction
Evaded Racism	Avoiding conversations about racism	Neglected opportunities in the curriculum to discuss racism
	Ignoring racism	A lack of recognition towards racism that one witnesses
	Lack of antiracist education	The absence of education addressing historical and current issues surrounding race and racism
	Lack of consequences for racism	Insufficient or no penalties put in place for perpetrators of racism
	Prioritizing White comfort	Antiracist education neglected or shut down to prevent White students from feeling uncomfortable
“Antiracist” Racism	Selective activism	The exclusion of certain BIPOC communities from antiracist activism
	White saviorism	Help offered by a white person to BIPOC for the purpose of presenting oneself as antiracist
	Tokenization	Situations in which BIPOC are singled out to create the appearance of racial equity
	Mishandled antiracist lesson material	Material meant to promote antiracist messages handled insensitively, often reinforcing the racial biases the material is meant to challenge
	Mishandled antiracist initiatives	Events, campaigns, or curriculum changes meant to promote antiracist messages handled insensitively, often reinforcing the biases meant to be challenged

**Definitions of Effects of Racism**

Effect	Definition
Desire to assimilate	The desire to be more “white”, or to distance oneself from one’s racial or ethnic community
Loneliness/alienation	A sense of isolation and non-belonging
Indignation	Feeling angry or annoyed
Shame	Feeling embarrassed or humiliated
Wishing peers were more educated	Understanding that ignorance was the cause of one or multiple racist incident(s), and wanting to eliminate that ignorance
Regret for not confronting perpetrator	Retrospective desire to educate perpetrator or stand up for oneself after a racist incident
Long-term insecurity	A loss of confidence that feels “permanent”
Loss of trust	Losing one’s feeling of safety and acceptance in the presence of the perpetrator of racism
Academic consequences	Seeing a negative impact on grades or a loss of academic opportunities
Feeling devalued	Feeling less important or appreciated compared to White classmates
Stress/emotional exhaustion	Strain brought on by events that induce anxiety or require emotional labour
Disappointment	Displeasure caused by the staff/faculty member’s failure to meet one’s expectations
Discouragement	Feeling discouraged from reporting future instances of racism

