Race-specific workplace stress

Through Aileen’s research and experience, she is able to map a progression that 
black workers in the workplace follow. Racism, whether subtle or blatant, can affect an 
individual internally and externally, potentially creating harms invisible to those around.  
The first level proceeds with micro and macro-aggression. Micro-aggression can 
be subtle remarks made towards a worker’s appearance, work ethic, lack of eye contact, 
etc. While most of these instances can be minor, it pushes the individual towards self- 
doubt and can cause self-serving emotions. Macro-aggression simply refers to the 
labeling of groups; using such terms as aggressive, threatening, difficult, etc. can create a 
misrepresentation for a group. With time, the second level, the worker’s response comes 
into play. The individual usually speaks up and is quickly dismissed as being over 
sensitive or simply difficult; this leads the individual to bury these reactions and mull 
them over internally. The third level ensues when the individual, internally concerned 
with his/her emotions, makes mistakes or slips-up on the job. After so many incidents, 
the manager soon notices and takes action, also known as the fourth level. Soon after, the 
individual reaches the fifth and final level, the crisis level. The author proceeds to 
analyze the many solutions or conclusions resulting from this spiral action. The best 
solution is for the individual to discover this progression and seek help immediately 
through counseling or therapy. The author emphasizes the effect can be substantially 
reversed if recognized early and steps are taken to correct the damage.

The article obviously has the common theme of racism in the workplace. While 
examples of intimidation are displayed, such as a gorilla picture in a coffee mug, the 
article focuses on minor incidents. Over time, the minor incidents lead to the same result 
of management stepping in; as with previous articles, management involvement results in 
a complication of the matter with few solutions on the horizon. This article does provide 
solutions such as counseling and therapy as opposed to protesting and court cases 
proposed by previous articles. Most articles merely state a problem without providing 
solutions.

Aileen Alleyne and Karen Minikin, Race-Specific Workplace Stress. Counseling & 
Psychotherapy Journal; Oct 2004, Vol. 15 Issue 8, p30-33, 4p, 1c 