

Anti-Queer Microaggressions Towards Queer Black Men

Research Prospectus

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Abstract

Microaggressions are reoccurring derogatory messages that degrade and/ or discredit one's identity. While invisible and unknown to many, they remain visible and apparent to those impacted by them. The research questions for this project are: (1) What microaggressions do Queer Black men experience within larger society? (2) To contrast with larger society, what microaggressions do Queer Black men experience within Black communities? By conducting focus groups, I will examine the intersectional microaggressions that Queer Black males experience in their own community, as well as document microaggression that they experience in larger society. After conducting my focus groups, I will be adopting Derald Wing Sue's taxonomy of microaggression themes to translate the underlying messages behind delivered microaggressions. The results in this study will aide in addressing an appeared gap within microaggression literature by, documenting how Queer Black males experience these muted, normalized insults and invalidations in society.

Keywords

Terms and Keywords:

- **Microaggressions:** Microaggressions are brief, every day, exchanges that send denigrating messages to certain individuals because of their group membership (Sue, 2010).
- **Intersectionality:** Intersectionality is known as the relationships among multiple dimensions and modalities of social relations and subject formations (McCall, 2005).
- **Black Masculinity:** Black Masculinity—as a subfield of Gender Studies—is tailored to study the typical behaviors of African American males (Milton, 2012).
- **Black Vernacular:** The distinctive, rule-governed form of language used by some Black/African Americans has a complex array of labels in linguistic and anthropological literature, including: African American language, African American English, Hip Hop Speech Style, Hip Hop Nation Language, Black English, Black Dialect, and the politically-driven 'Ebonics' (as cited in Brown and Casanova, 2014).
- **Queer:** Queer, in sexual politics, description of sexuality that rejects normative definitions of appropriate feminine and masculine sexual behavior. More contemporary meanings of queer have been picked up and used by activists and academics to mark movements within sexual identity politics and theoretical frameworks for understanding gender and sexuality (Barber et al., 2017).

Literature Review

Themes across Microaggression Research:

- Predominately studies on single identity microaggressions are focused on racial, gender, sexual orientation microaggressions (Sterzing et.al., 2017).
- Within microaggression studies there is an evident amount of studies focused on racial microaggressions. From the experiences of racial microaggressions there are themes that victims experience and encounter from microaggression perpetrators:
 - Assumed superiority of White cultural values/communication styles, Assumption of deviance, Assumed universality of the Black American experience, (Henfield, 2011):
- Microaggression studies are primarily studied in psychology with scholars focusing on the individual, and/or any stressors that one experiences from receiving microaggressions (Embrick et. al, 2017).
- Kevin Nadal et. al (2011) conducted focus groups to investigate and analyze how LGB individuals coped and processed the effects of sexual orientation microaggressions, and additionally examined how LGB individuals were impacted mentally from these microaggressions. Various results appeared from this study.
 - Behavioral reactions individuals reacted with: passive coping, confrontational coping, and protective coping (Nadal et. Al, 2011). Cognitively individuals reacted with attitudes of resiliency, empowerment, conformity, and acceptance (Nadal et. Al, 2011). Emotional reactions that were found were feelings of: discomfort, feeling unsafe, anger/frustration, sadness, and embarrassment/shame (Nadal et. Al, 2011).
- The study also argued, "Several participants cited how microaggressions may have led to specific mental health problems, namely depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder" (Nadal et. Al, 2011). By providing an intersectional lens within microaggression studies, Nadal notes, "Because this is not an empirically based analysis, it may not be a complete depiction of the experiences of LGBT people of color"(Nadal, 2013).

Gaps within Microaggression Research:

- Within the sociological and psychological field there is a dearth in intersectional microaggression research (Sterzing et. al., 2017). The dearth in microaggression research perpetrates the lack of regard towards those who have intersecting identities or are double minorities. The absence of research is needed to document the experiences, impacts, and coping methods of intersectional microaggressions. Having empirical studies on this topic will be beneficial towards widening the perception of microaggressions within professional fields, society, and communities.

Objectives

Through qualitative investigation the purpose of this study is to address and examine: (1) What microaggressions do Queer Black men experience within larger society? (2) To contrast with larger society, what microaggressions do Queer Black men experience within Black communities?

Methods

Sampling Strategy: Snowball Sampling

➤ It is sometimes used as the main vehicle through which informants are accessed, or as an auxiliary mean, which assists researchers in enriching sampling clusters, and accessing new participants and social groups when other contact avenues have dried up. (Noy, 2008).

Data Collection Strategy: Focus Groups

➤ Focus groups range in size from 6 to 12 individuals and capitalize on group dynamics to stimulate discussion (Guest, 2017).

Coding and Analytical Strategy:

➤ I will be adopting Derald Wing Sue's taxonomy (Sue, 2010) on microaggression themes and applying it to my responses from the key informant interviews.

THEMES	MICROAGGRESSION	MESSAGE
Use of Sexist/Heterosexist Language: Terms that exclude or degrade women and LGBT persons.	Use of the pronoun "he" to refer to all people. Two options for relationship status: married or single.	Male experience is universal. Female experience is meaningless. LGB partnerships do not matter/are meaningless.
Denial of Individual Racism/Sexism/Heterosexism: A statement made when bias is denied.	"I'm not racist. I have several Black friends." "As an employer, I always treat men and women equally."	I am immune to racism because I have friends of color. I am incapable of sexism.
Second-Class Citizen: Occurs when a target group member receives differential treatment from the power group.	Person of color mistaken for a service worker.	People of color are servants to Whites. They couldn't possibly occupy high status positions.
Assumption of Abnormality: Occurs when it is implied that there is something wrong with being LGBT.	Two men holding hands in public are stared at by strangers. Students use the term "gay" to describe a fellow student who is socially ostracized at school.	You should keep your displays of affection private because they are offensive. People who are weird and different are "gay".

Figure 1. Sue, Wing Derald. 2010. Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation. John Wiley & Sons Inc.

Future Directions

- ❑ In part of the analytical and coding process, after analyzing the responses from they key informant interviews, I will adopt Sue's taxonomy and code how anti-Queer microaggressions presents itself within Black Vernacular Language.
- ❑ By studying anti-Queer microaggressions within African American/ Black communities and wider society, this research will aid in furthering intersectional discussion within microaggression research in the Sociological field, as well as extend or provide platforms of discussions on microaggressions and the various/complex masculine identities in Black communities.

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