

Microaggression Prevalence in a Mid Sized College

Venessa Gaston

State University of New York at Plattsburgh

A Master's Thesis submitted to the Department of Psychology in partial fulfillment of
specialist degree requirements for the School Psychology Program
at the State University of New York at Plattsburgh

Approvals:

Dale Phillips, Ph.D.
Thesis Committee Chairperson
Professor of Psychology

William Gaeddert, Ph.D.
Thesis Committee Member
Professor of Psychology

Jennifer Phillips
Thesis Committee Member

Abstract

Microaggressions are defined as everyday verbal or nonverbal exchanges that convey contemptuous and derogatory messages that may be interpreted as acts of non-physical aggression. They can also be described as subtle acts of discrimination directed at marginalized groups that unfortunately occur on a daily basis. Psychological research has shown that there are many detrimental effects to those who experience these microaggressions, and specific to this research, can impact individuals in the school environment. The purpose of my study is to determine whether students attending the State University of New York at Plattsburgh are experiencing these subtle acts of discrimination.

Microaggression Prevalence in a Mid Sized College

Microaggressions occur on a daily basis in various environments such as school and the workplace. They are known to be subtle forms of discrimination, which can occur due to an individual's race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, or religious affiliations (Sue and Capodilupo, 2008). In my study, I will focus primarily on the racial/ethnic minority students and students of the lesbian, gay, or bisexual (LGBT) individuals attending a predominately White institution. Studies conducted previously, support the beliefs that individuals of marginalized groups in society, such as racial and ethnic minority students experience microaggressions at significantly higher levels than European American students while being educated in historically White institutions (Blume et al., 2012). Racial microaggressions are events that have the effect of insulting or otherwise putting down people because of their race or ethnicity (Sue, 2010). The pervasive slights and denigration may cause psychological distress to members of marginalized groups (Dovidio and Gaertner, 2000). For example, some researchers (e.g., Franklin, 2004), have suggested that repetitive microaggressions may have a negative impact on an individual's self-esteem (as cited in Sue, 2009).

Microaggressions can negatively affect a person's sense of efficacy. Self-efficacy theory, which can partially explain an individual's behavior was originated from the social cognitive theory by Albert Bandura. His self-efficacy theory posits that people can make their own decisions and decide how to behave based on the belief of their own capabilities, rather than their actual knowledge or skills. This idea of self-efficacy is important because it helps determine our choices, it motivates us, and it helps us deal with failures and setbacks in life (Bandura, 2009). Therefore, if a student is not

motivated, and is unable to deal with failures and setbacks in life appropriately, then this can result in a low academic performance.

Microraggressions among LGBT individuals can be similar to racial or ethnic minorities in that they both experience prejudice or discrimination such as snubs, dismissive looks, gestures, and tones (Constantine & Sue, 2007). Many individuals commit subtle, and presumably innocuous, acts of discrimination without being aware of it. For example, asking a lesbian if they have a boyfriend or husband denies and ignores their sexual orientation, and consequently, part of their identity. This type of question assumes that the individual is heterosexual (e.g., normal and natural), which can be considered a form of discrimination (Rondahl, Innala, and Carlsson, 2006), and at the very least, oppressive (Land and Kitzinger, 2005).

Racial or ethnic minority students attending a predominately White institution may experience racial hostility, feel unsupported, discriminated against, or alienated (Lewis, Chesler, and Forman, 2001). A study by Blume, Denny, Lovato, and Thyken (2012) examined the relationship between microaggressions and alcohol use among racial minority students at a historically White institution. They proposed that culturally unfamiliar and sometimes challenging institutional cultures can be associated with an increased stress level on students of color attending these institutions. Consequently, a student's stress level may be increased when they repeatedly experience stereotypes in performance-based situations. Another situation that can be a potential stressor can be the encounter of an ethnic or racial bias. These acts of prejudice and discrimination, which include microaggressions, have been linked to many different types of poor health and mental health outcomes (Sue, 2010). Anxiety has been shown to be associated with stress

in college students, especially those of color. This can cause a number of health issues, such as binge drinking among college students (Blume et al., (2012).

Blume et al. (2012) explored the use of alcohol use among students of color. The research participants included 684 college students between the ages of 18 and 20 years old, 178 participants who self-identified as students of color which consisted of 100 African-American students, 37 Asian American students, 6 American Indian students, 35 Hispanic or Latino American students, and five students who identified with more than one ethnic group. Data were collected using The Daily Drinking Questionnaire, which examines the drinking behavior of students of color and the Rutgers Alcohol Problem Index which is designed to measure the frequency of negative drinking consequences. Participants were also asked to complete the Situational Confidence Questionnaire, which has been used to examine self-efficacy in high risk drinking situations among college students of color. Researchers also examined the participant's reported symptoms of anxiety and personal sense of self-efficacy. Anxiety was measured with the Beck Anxiety Inventory, and the General Perceived Self-Efficacy Scale was used to assess self-efficacy related to coping with daily hassles. Lastly, self-report data were collected through the use of open-ended questions.

Results indicated that students of color attending a predominately White institution reported racial and ethnic microaggressions at significantly higher levels than European American students. The researchers concluded that students of color who experience microaggressions might be at increased risk for higher anxiety and binge alcohol use.

As mentioned previously, individuals who experience microaggressions or discrimination on a daily basis may be at a risk for developing mental health problems (Blume et al., 2012). In another study, 5,147 fifth grade students from public schools in the United States participated in a study exploring whether there was a correlation between racial/ethnic discrimination and mental health disorders (Coker et al., 2009). The results of this study showed that 15% percent of children reported perceived racial/ethnic discrimination and 80% of the children reported that the discrimination occurred within the school environment. The children who reported the racial/ethnic discrimination displayed symptoms of depression, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, oppositional defiant disorder, and conduct disorder. The correlation between depression and perceived discrimination was highest for depression.

It is also important for students to be aware of microaggressions within the classroom setting. If individuals are not aware of what microaggressions are, they may commit these acts on a daily basis without thinking that they can have an effect on others. A study by Sue and his graduate students at Columbia University (2009), supported this argument, asserting that microaggressions in the classroom triggered difficult dialogues regarding race and racism. Sue studied the dialogue and interactions among the students and observed how they dealt with microaggressions within the classroom. The participants were comprised of two focus groups consisting of fourteen students of diverse backgrounds. The results of the study indicated that the students were not always capable of handling microaggressions when they occurred, which led to tension among the students. Both focus groups reported powerful behavioral, cognitive, and emotional reactions in the students once the microaggressions occurred (Sue et al., 2009).

According to Land and Kitzinger (2005), there are also several types of microaggressions that affect LGBT individuals, including heterosexist ideologies (i.e., a medium which reinforces the belief that heterosexuality is the only normal and natural sexual orientation). LGBT microaggressions include the use of heterosexist terminology, which endorses a heteronormative culture, reinforcing heterosexist behaviors, assumption of a universal LGBT experience, and assumption of sexual pathology. Other, more explicit examples of heterosexist terminology include situations in which individuals use the term “gay” to imply something bad, or using derogatory terms such as “faggot” or “dyke.” Additionally, the endorsement of a heteronormative culture/behaviors consist of instances when heterosexuals assume that LGBT individuals should speak, act, or behave more like heterosexuals (e.g., telling a gay man to “act straight,” or to speak more “manly.” The assumption of universal experience is the stereotype that all LGBT persons are the same and have identical experiences. An example of this assumption can include assuming that all individuals “come out” during a specific time in their lives. The assumption of sexual pathology and abnormality occurs when heterosexual individuals behave in a specific way assuming that all LGBT persons are sexually promiscuous. Examples can include asking an LGBT person if he or she has HIV/AIDS or asking if they have numerous sexual partners (Nadal, 2008).

There have not been many studies conducted within the school environment, however there is a growing body of literature that discusses the negative effects of microaggressions on LGBT individuals. One study explored the phenomenon of sexual microaggressions with self-identified LGBT individuals and the effect on the therapeutic relationship with their clinician. The results of this study indicated that sexual orientation

microaggressions had negative emotive, cognitive, and behavioral consequences for LGBT clients and detrimentally impacted the overall therapeutic process (Shelton, 2009). In this study, the clinicians' biases interfered with the overall therapeutic process, which can be related to a student's overall learning process in the classroom. It is likely not farfetched to conclude that this knowledge can be used to help improve the quality of services provided to sexual minorities.

Another study was conducted to explore and understand sexual microaggressions from the perspectives of gays, lesbians, and bisexual (LGBT) individuals, to determine whether subtle forms of discrimination towards them exist (Nadal et al., 2010). Participants were gathered from a public college in a Northeastern metropolitan area and the general community. The participants identified themselves as lesbian, gay, or bisexual working professionals, undergraduate students, or graduate students. Researchers utilized focus groups and a semi-structured interview, which included open-ended questions and follow up based on existing theories of microaggressions to explore LGBT microaggressions experienced by LGBT individuals (Sue et al., 2007). Researchers identified eight microaggression themes, including the use of heterosexist terminology, endorsement of heteronormative culture/behaviors, assumption of universal LGBT experience, exoticization, discomfort/ disapproval of LGBT experience, denial of the reality of heterosexism, assaults and threatening behaviors, and the assumption of sexual pathology/ abnormality. The first theme, which is the use of heterosexist language, is used to degrade LGBT individuals. Participants described overhearing words such as "faggot," "gay," and "dyke" and indicated that it sends the message that it is inferior or undesirable to be LGBT. Specific examples of this usage were given by the participants,

many of them stating that it is often used when someone becomes angry with another person such as “You’re a lesbian, go to hell.” Participants disclosed that heterosexist terms were hurtful, distressful, and made them feel uncomfortable or unsafe. The endorsement of heteronormative culture/behaviors theme occurs when LGBT individuals are expected to be or act like heterosexuals. Participants described their experiences as being told to “act straight” in certain social situations. Assumptions of the universal LGBT experience theme refers to situations where heterosexual individuals assume that all LGBT individuals share the same experiences. An example given by one of the participants was his friend making the assumption that all gay men could not play football because they are not “masculine” enough. The exoticization theme refers to when LGBT individuals feel they are treated like an object, or dehumanized. An example given by a female participant who identified as bisexual included feeling objectified and exoticized by heterosexual males because they assumed that due to her sexual orientation she was expected to participate in certain sexual acts.

The discomfort/disapproval of the LGBT experience theme occurs when lesbians, gays, and bisexual individuals are treated with disrespect or disapproval. Many of the participants reported experiencing messages that implied negative consequences if they disclosed their sexual orientation, and additionally, feared if they are visible or present that they would be portrayed and perceived in a negative manner. The denial of reality of heterosexism theme refers to situations when a heterosexual individual denies the existence of heterosexists or homophobic experiences. A female participant of the study gave an example of her experience with this in her institution while working on her dissertation. She mentioned that her professor who was overseeing her dissertation did

not understand her personal situation involving her partner, which was preventing her from attaining a certain job in another state that did not approve of same sex marriages. His lack of understanding was considered in her opinion a subtle form of discrimination. The assumption of sexual pathology/abnormality occurs when LGBT individuals are presumed to be sexual deviants. Participants described this theme as finding that other individuals tend to assume that they are attracted to them solely based on their sexual orientation. The participants reported that they felt that heterosexist individuals assumed that they were going to “hit” on them, while concomitantly not respecting the fact that they do not just make unbridled sexual advances. The last theme that emerged was assaults and threatening behavior, which participants discussed how they were victims of assaults, threatening behaviors, or in some cases both. The themes that emerged in this study demonstrate how LGBT individuals, along with other oppressed groups in society experience various forms of microaggressions.

Microaggressions occur on a daily basis, whether they are intentional or not. Many individuals may not be aware that they are committing acts of microaggressions, which is why it is important to increase the awareness of subtle forms of discrimination. Based on findings from research, it would appear that teaching others how various forms of discrimination may occur and how it can be detrimental to those experiencing these acts is crucial. Therefore, it is important that individuals become aware of certain biases they may have against others and realize that these biases may influence their interactions and negatively impact others. The purpose of this study was to increase awareness of the occurrences of microaggressions in an attempt to decrease their prevalence, as well as inform individuals of their possible detrimental effect to others.

Method

Participants

Participants in this study were students and graduates from the State University of New York at Plattsburgh.

Materials and Procedure

Each participant was asked to read and sign an Informed Consent Form, which briefly describes the purpose of the experiment. The participants who agreed to participate in the study were then given a survey, which asked for demographic information, and then 16 likert-scale type questions based on their student life experiences. The demographic portion of the survey provides information about the participants' sex, education level, race, current grade point average, and sexual orientation. The 16 likert-scale questionnaire consists of questions derived from various instruments measuring microaggression experiences. Questions from the Student Life Experiences Scale (SLES) was used, which is a survey that was developed to assess racial microaggressions within the school environment. In this survey, the participants are asked to rate how frequently they experienced a microaggression during their college experience.

At the time of this study, there was only one developed scale that postulated to measure the intersectionality of racial/ethnic minority and LGBT experiences with microaggressions (Balsam, Molina, Beadness, Simoni, and Walters (2011). Nevertheless, both groups appear to share common marginalizations and themes, which have been studied by researchers. The themes covered in these surveys have been introduced and discussed by several researchers (e.g., Nadal, 2008; Sue, Bucceri, et al., 2007; Sue,

Capodilupo, et al. 2007; Sue, Nadal, et al., 2008) and include various ways that microaggressions may impact members of oppressed groups such as people of color, women, and lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals.

The questions used from the Student Life Experiences Scale, were only applicable to both the racial/ethnic minority and LGBT populations. Questions from a gender microaggression interview that probed for examples of microaggressions were also used. These questions were originally open-ended questions; however, in this study they were converted to likert-scale type questions. Only questions that were believed to be applicable to both racial/ethnic minority and LGBT populations were used.

Results

The descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) for the scores of the number of reported microaggression incidents on campus by sex, academic standing, race, and sexual orientation are presented in Table 1. In the current study, the statistics indicate that the distributions of each item are skewed and kurtotic, which reduces the power of the statistic.

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted for each of the 16 survey items by sex as presented in Table 2. The results indicate that there is no difference in the survey items by sex.

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted for each of the 16 survey items by race as presented in Table 3. The results indicated that seven out of the 16 survey items are statistically significant. The statistically significant items are: I was asked to speak for and represent my race or sexual orientation $F(4, 132) = 2.69, p < .03$, A teacher said something about one of my physical features, or dress, that is due to my

race or sexual orientation $F(4, 132) = 3.31, p < .01$, I have been blatantly discriminated against because of my race or sexual orientation $F(4, 132) = 2.85, p < .03$, Someone has made a disparaging remark or used derogatory language about my race or sexual orientation $F(4, 132) = 5.44, p < .00$, Someone's behaviors has made me feel uncomfortable, hurt, or devalued because of my race or sexual orientation $F(4, 132) = 3.97, p < .01$, Sometimes I feel as if people look past me or don't see me as a real person $F(4, 132) = 8.05, p < .00$, and I notice that there are few people of my racial background or sexual orientation in books and magazines $F(4, 132) = 11.79, p < .00$. The results indicate that there is a difference in the items by race.

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted for each of the 16 survey items by sexual orientation as presented in Table 4. The results indicated that 10 out of the 16 survey items are statistically significant. The statistically significant items are: I was asked to speak for and represent my race or sexual orientation $F(3, 131) = 2.56, p < .00$, I felt bad as a result of a classroom lesson that involved my race or sexual orientation $F(3, 131) = 4.25, p < .01$, I overheard a teacher tell an offensive joke about my race or sexual orientation $F(3, 131) = 3.72, p < .01$, A teacher did not treat me as well in class as other students $F(3, 131) = 3.76, p < .01$, I have been blatantly discriminated against because of my race or sexual orientation $F(3, 131) = 6.63, p < .00$, Someone has made a disparaging remark or used derogatory language about my race or sexual orientation $F(3, 131) = 8.46, p < .00$, Someone's behaviors has made me feel uncomfortable, hurt, or devalued because of my race or sexual orientation $F(3, 131) = 7.04, p < .00$, People hold sexual stereotypes about me $F(3, 131) = 8.67, p < .00$, I notice that there are few people of my racial background or sexual orientation in books and

magazines $F(3, 131) = 6.14, p < .00$, and I have been hit or beaten up due to my race or sexual orientation $F(3, 131) = 8.01, p < .00$.

The descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) for the scores of the number of reported microaggression incidents of Caucasian, Non-Caucasian, Heterosexual, and Non-Heterosexual participants are presented in Table 5. The results indicated that Non-Caucasian and Non-Heterosexual participants reported higher ratings of microaggression experiences than Caucasian and Heterosexual participants.

Due to the large disparity in cell sizes for the analyses of sexual orientation, the Levene's test of homogeneity of variance was conducted. The results indicated that 5 out of the 16 survey items are statistically significant as presented in Table 6. The statistically significant items are: I was asked to speak for and represent my race or sexual orientation $F(3, 131) = 2.56, p < .05$, A teacher did not treat me as well in class as other students $F(3, 131) = 3.76, p < .00$, I have been blatantly discriminated against because of my race or sexual orientation $F(3, 131) = 6.63, p < .00$, Someone's behaviors has made me feel uncomfortable, hurt, or devalued because of my race or sexual orientation $F(3, 131) = 7.04, p < .02$, and I have been hit or beaten up due to my race or sexual orientation $F(3, 131) = 8.01, p < .00$. Although ANOVA results are generally robust, due to the violation of assumptions of homogeneity, the results must be interpreted with caution.

The total number of microaggressions that occurred for each race are presented in Table 7. The results indicated that 100% of participants that identified themselves as African-American/Black experienced one or more microaggressions, 100% of participants that identified themselves as Asian experienced one or more microaggressions, 70.9% of participants that identified themselves as Caucasian

experienced one or more microaggressions, 85.7% of participants that identified themselves as Latino/Hispanic experienced one or more microaggressions, and 75% of participants that identified themselves as Other experienced one or more microaggressions. Although there were large differences in the numbers of people self-identifying racial categories, the results suggest that there is a difference in experiences of microaggressions due to race.

The total number of microaggressions that occurred for each sexual orientation are presented in Table 8. The results indicated that 71.9% of participants that identified themselves as Heterosexual experienced one or more microaggressions, 100% of participants that identified themselves as Homosexual experienced one or more microaggressions, 100% of participants that identified themselves as Bisexual experienced one or more microaggressions, and 66.7% of participants that identified themselves as Other experienced one or more microaggressions. The results indicate that there is a difference in experiences of acts of aggression due to sexual orientation.

Table 1

Summary of Means, Standard Deviations, Skewness, and Kurtosis for the scores of the number of reported microaggression incidents on campus

Variable	N	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Sex	133	1.89	.308	-2.60	4.84
Year	131	3.43	.953	-.195	-.754
Race	133	2.92	.813	-.634	1.93
Sexual Orientation	132	1.16	.577	3.85	14.4
I was asked to speak for and represent my race or sexual orientation	133	1.33	.660	2.26	5.19
I felt bad as a result of	133	1.49	.884	2.07	4.08

a classroom lesson

I overheard a teacher tell an offensive joke	133	1.28	.607	2.45	6.25
A teacher did not treat me as well in class as other students	133	1.37	.733	2.69	8.94
I was insulted, laughed at, or called a bad name by a teacher, or by a student while in the presence of a teacher	133	1.14	.392	2.80	7.65
A teacher said something about one of my physical features, or dress	133	1.14	.429	3.72	17.1
I have been blatantly discriminated against	132	1.33	.757	2.92	9.40
Someone has made a disparaging remark or used derogatory language	133	1.69	1.12	1.73	2.21
Someone's behavior has made me feel uncomfortable, hurt, or devalued	133	1.60	.977	1.67	2.04
I have felt physically or emotionally unsafe	132	1.33	.805	2.81	7.88
I have felt pressured to act a certain way	133	1.83	1.19	1.40	.992
I felt that a teacher or student has treated me a certain way because of stereotypes	132	1.52	.904	1.88	3.14
People hold sexual stereotypes about me	132	1.80	1.21	1.47	1.06
Sometimes I feel as if people look past me or don't see me as a real person	133	1.29	.757	3.08	9.99

I notice that there are few people of my racial background or sexual orientation in books and magazines	133	1.79	1.41	1.57	.833
I have been hit or beaten up due to my race or sexual orientation	133	1.02	.122	8.06	63.9

Note. Values for each survey question are mean scores on a 5-point scale (1 = never happened to me, 5 = frequently, weekly).

Table 2

Statistical Analysis of the Students' Perception of Microaggressions Based on Occurrences by Sex

Item	F	df	Sig.
I was asked to speak for and represent my race or sexual orientation	.486	1	.487
I felt bad as a result of a classroom lesson	2.42	1	.122
I overheard a teacher tell an offensive joke	.172	1	.679
A teacher did not treat me as well in class as other students	.105	1	.747
I was insulted, laughed at, or called a bad name by a teacher, or by a student while in the presence of a teacher	2.10	1	.150
A teacher said something about one of my physical features, or dress	.000	1	1.00
I have been blatantly	2.13	1	.147

discriminated against

Someone has made a disparaging remark or used derogatory language	.110	1	.740
Someone's behavior has made me feel uncomfortable, hurt, or devalued	1.64	1	.202
I have felt physically or emotionally unsafe	1.57	1	.213
I have felt pressured to act a certain way	1.05	1	.307
I felt that a teacher or student has treated me a certain way because of stereotypes	.060	1	.806
People hold sexual stereotypes about me	.031	1	.860
Sometimes I feel as if people look past me or don't see me as a real person	.002	1	.969
I notice that there are few people of my racial background or sexual orientation in books and magazines	1.02	1	.315
I have been hit or beaten up due to my race or sexual orientation	.236	1	.628

Table 3

Statistical Analysis of the Students' Perception of Microaggressions Based on Occurrences by Race

Item	F	df	Sig.
I was asked to speak for	2.69	4	.034

and represent my race or
sexual orientation

I felt bad as a result of
a classroom lesson .874 4 .481

I overheard a teacher
tell an offensive joke .723 4 .578

A teacher did not treat
me as well in class as
other students .321 4 .863

I was insulted, laughed at,
or called a bad name by a
teacher, or by a student
while in the presence of a
teacher .532 4 .712

A teacher said something
about one of my physical
features, or dress 3.31 4 .013

I have been blatantly
discriminated against 2.85 4 .027

Someone has made a
disparaging remark or
used derogatory language 5.44 4 .000

Someone's behavior has
made me feel uncomfortable,
hurt, or devalued 3.97 4 .005

I have felt physically or
emotionally unsafe 1.17 4 .327

I have felt pressured to
act a certain way 2.10 4 .084

I felt that a teacher or
student has treated me
a certain way because
of stereotypes 2.17 4 .076

People hold sexual
stereotypes about me 2.22 4 .070

Sometimes I feel as if people look past me or don't see me as a real person	8.05	4	.000
I notice that there are few people of my racial background or sexual orientation in books and magazines	11.8	4	.000
I have been hit or beaten up due to my race or sexual orientation	.864	4	.488

Table 4

Statistical Analysis of the Students' Perception of Microaggressions Based on Occurrences by Sexual Orientation

Item	F	df	Sig.
I was asked to speak for and represent my race or sexual orientation	6.59	3	.000
I felt bad as a result of a classroom lesson	4.25	3	.007
I overheard a teacher tell an offensive joke	3.72	3	.013
A teacher did not treat me as well in class as other students	3.76	3	.013
I was insulted, laughed at, or called a bad name by a teacher, or by a student while in the presence of a teacher	.505	3	.680
A teacher said something about one of my physical features, or dress	.342	3	.795

I have been blatantly discriminated against	6.63	3	.000
Someone has made a disparaging remark or used derogatory language	8.47	3	.000
Someone's behavior has made me feel uncomfortable, hurt, or devalued	7.04	3	.000
I have felt physically or emotionally unsafe	2.05	3	.110
I have felt pressured to act a certain way	.701	3	.553
I felt that a teacher or student has treated me a certain way because of stereotypes	1.03	3	.380
People hold sexual stereotypes about me	8.67	3	.000
Sometimes I feel as if people look past me or don't see me as a real person	.377	3	.770
I notice that there are few people of my racial background or sexual orientation in books and magazines	6.14	3	.001
I have been hit or beaten up due to my race or sexual orientation	8.01	3	.000

Table 5

Summary of Means for the scores of the number of reported microaggression incidents of the Total Sample, White, Non-White, Heterosexual, and Non-Heterosexual Individuals

	Total Sample (N = 133)	White (n = 96)	Non-White (n = 37)	Heterosexual (n = 121)	Non- Heterosexual (n = 11)
Item	M(SD)	M(SD)	M(SD)	M(SD)	M(SD)
I was asked to speak for and represent my race or sexual orientation	1.33(.660)	1.22(.527)	1.62(.861)	1.27(.592)	2.00(1.00)
I felt bad as a result of a classroom lesson	1.49(.884)	1.45(.857)	1.59(.956)	1.42(.834)	2.27(1.10)
I overheard a teacher tell an offensive joke	1.28(.607)	1.24(.594)	1.38(.639)	1.25(.567)	1.64(.924)
A teacher did not treat me as well in class as other students	1.37(.733)	1.33(.735)	1.46(.730)	1.35(.680)	1.55(1.21)
I was insulted, laughed at, or called a bad name by a teacher, or by a student while in the presence of a teacher	1.14(.392)	1.16(.419)	1.11(.315)	1.14(.394)	1.18(.405)
A teacher said something about one of my physical features, or dress	1.14(.429)	1.09(.293)	1.27(.652)	1.15(.441)	1.09(.302)
I have been blatantly discriminated against	1.33(.757)	1.23(.691)	1.57(.867)	1.26(.642)	2.09(1.38)
Someone has made a disparaging remark or used derogatory language	1.69(1.12)	1.45(905)	2.32(1.36)	1.57(.999)	3.00(1.55)
Someone's behavior has made me feel uncomfortable, hurt,	1.60(.977)	1.42(.842)	2.08(1.14)	1.51(.886)	2.64(1.36)

or devalued

I have felt physically or emotionally unsafe	1.33(.805)	1.27(.706)	1.46(1.02)	1.29(.760)	1.73(1.19)
I have felt pressured to act a certain way	1.83(1.19)	1.79(1.16)	1.95(1.27)	1.80(1.17)	2.27(1.35)
I felt that a teacher or student has treated me a certain way because of stereotypes	1.52(.904)	1.39(.762)	1.84(1.14)	1.51(.898)	1.64(1.03)
People hold sexual stereotypes about me	1.80(1.21)	1.63(1.11)	2.24(1.34)	1.66(1.09)	3.36(1.43)
Sometimes I feel as if people look past me or don't see me as a real person	1.29(.757)	1.09(.327)	1.81(1.20)	1.31(.786)	1.09(.302)
I notice that there are few people of my racial background or sexual orientation in books and magazines	1.79(1.41)	1.36(1.05)	2.89(1.65)	1.65(1.33)	3.27(1.55)
I have been hit or beaten up due to my race or sexual orientation	1.02(.122)	1.01(.102)	1.03(.164)	1.01(.091)	1.09(.302)

Note. Values for each survey question are mean scores on a 5-point scale (1 = never happened to me, 5 = frequently, weekly).

Table 6

Statistical Analysis of the Levene's Test of Homogeneity of Variances by Sexual Orientation

Item	F	df	Sig.
I was asked to speak for and represent my race or sexual orientation	6.59	3	.047
I felt bad as a result of a classroom lesson	4.25	3	.284

I overheard a teacher tell an offensive joke	3.72	3	.154
A teacher did not treat me as well in class as other students	3.76	3	.000
I was insulted, laughed at, or called a bad name by a teacher, or by a student while in the presence of a teacher	.505	3	.198
A teacher said something about one of my physical features, or dress	.342	3	.236
I have been blatantly discriminated against	6.63	3	.000
Someone has made a disparaging remark or used derogatory language	8.47	3	.064
Someone's behavior has made me feel uncomfortable, hurt, or devalued	7.04	3	.023
I have felt physically or emotionally unsafe	2.05	3	.050
I have felt pressured to act a certain way	.701	3	.503
I felt that a teacher or student has treated me a certain way because of stereotypes	1.03	3	.108
People hold sexual stereotypes about me	8.67	3	.333
Sometimes I feel as if people look past me or don't see me as a real person	.377	3	.148

I notice that there are few people of my racial background or sexual orientation in books and magazines	6.14	3	.224
I have been hit or beaten up due to my race or sexual orientation	8.01	3	.000

Table 7

Summary of Total Number of reported microaggression incidents of those who identified as African-American/Black, Asian, White, Latino/Hispanic, and Other

	African-American/Black (n = 13)	Asian (n = 6)	White (n = 96)	Latino/Hispanic (n = 14)	Other (n = 4)
Total Number of Individuals Reporting Acts of Aggression	13	6	66	12	3

Table 8

Summary of Total Number of reported microaggression incidents of those who identified as Heterosexual, Homosexual, Bisexual, and Other

	Heterosexual (n = 121)	Homosexual (n = 4)	Bisexual (n = 4)	Other (n = 3)
Total Number of Individuals Reporting Acts of Aggression	87	4	4	2

Discussion

Microaggressions which are known to be subtle forms of discrimination, can occur due to an individual's race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, or religious affiliations (Sue and Capodilupo, 2008). Studies tend to indicate that marginalized groups in society often experience microaggressions, which can cause psychological distress (Dovidio and Gaertner, 2000). This study primarily focused on individuals' race/ethnicity and sexual orientation. The results of this study indicated that Non-Caucasian and Non-heterosexual participants reported higher ratings of microaggression experiences on campus than Caucasian and Heterosexual participants. The results are similar to studies that have been conducted previously, supporting the beliefs that individuals of marginalized groups in society, such as racial and ethnic minority students experience microaggressions at significantly higher levels than European American students while being educated in historically White institutions (Blume et al., 2012).

Although this study was comprised of a variety of students, the students all attended the same university. The generalizability of the findings can be enhanced by demonstrating that they apply to a wider range of individuals attending other institutions as well. Microaggression experiences can also be better represented in the findings by sampling a larger number of individuals.

This particular study focuses on the occurrences of microaggressions on campus experienced by racial minorities and LGBT individuals. The study results, however are limited by its methods, including a cross-sectional design, a non-random sample, and a lack of participants from racial minorities and LGBT individuals.

Future research directions include improving upon more culturally sensitive

demographic measures, determining whether microaggressions may be associated with specific health risks, and including open-ended questions for further information. The demographic measures used in this survey to identify an individual's sexual orientation were outdated terms such as "homosexual." Future researchers should also avoid using the term "other" and list all of the current identifying terminologies regarding an individual's race, as well as sexual orientation, to avoid the possibility of offending participants.

Although the interpretation of the results is limited by study methods, the findings provide evidence that microaggressions related to an individual's race or sexual orientation exists on campus. As mentioned previously, future research directions can include determining whether microaggressions on campus may be associated with specific health risks such as increased anxiety levels which has been shown to be a potential risk (Blume et al., 2012). Institutions, such as historically White universities, should become more aware and proactive in providing support on campus for individuals of marginalized groups. The results of this study suggest that faculty, administrators, and students should be cognizant of the potential negative influences that microaggressions may have on racial/ethnic minority and LGBT students. Becoming knowledgeable on microaggressions and promoting a safe campus environment could benefit students in preventing potential risks associated with microaggressions experienced by students.

References

- Balsam, K., Molina, Y., Beadnell, B., Simoni, J., & Walters, K. (2011). Measuring Multiple Minority Stress: The LGBT People of Color Microaggressions Scale. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 17*(2), 163-174.
- Bandura, A. (2009). *Self-Efficacy in Changing Societies*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Blume, A., Denny, N., Lovato, L., & Thyken, B. (2012). The Relationship of Microaggressions With Alcohol Use and Anxiety Among Ethnic Minority College Students in a Historically White Institution. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 45-54*. Doi:10.1037/a0025457
- Coker, T.R., Elliott, M.N., Kanouse, D. E., Grunbaum, J. A., Schwebel, D.D., Gilliland, M.J., et al. (2009). Perceived racial/ethnic discrimination among fifth-grade students and its association with mental health. *American Journal of Public Health, 99*(5), 878-884.
- Constantine, M. & Sue, D. W. (2007). Perception of racial microaggressions among Black supervisees in cross-racial dyads. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 54*, 142-153. Doi:10.1037/0022-0167.54.2.142
- Dovidio, J. & Gaertner, S. (2000). Aversive Racism and Selection Decisions: 1989 and 1999. *Psychological Science, 11*, 315-319.
- Land, V. & Kitzinger, C. (2005) Speaking as a Lesbian: Correcting the Heterosexist Presumption. *Research on Language and Social Interaction, 38*:4, 371-416.
- Lewis, A., Chesler, M., & Forman, T. (2001). The Impact of “Colorblind” Ideologies on Students of Color: Intergroup Relations at a Predominantly White University. *Journal of Negro Education, 69*, 74-91.

- Nadal, K., Issa, M., Leon, J., Meterko, V., Wideman, M., & Wong, Y. (2010). *Sexual Orientation Microaggressions: Perspectives of Lesbians, Gays, and Bisexuals*. New York, NY.
- Nadal, K. (2008). Preventing racial, ethnic, gender, sexual minority, disability, and religious microaggressions: Recommendations for promoting positive mental health. *Prevention in Counseling Psychology: Theory, Research, Practice, & Training*.
- Rondahl, G., Innala, S., & Carlsson, M. (2006). Heterosexual assumptions in verbal and non-verbal communication in nursing. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 56(4), 373-381.
- Shelton, K. (2011). Sexual Orientation Microaggressions: The Experience of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Queer Clients in Psychotherapy. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 58(2), 210-221.
- Sue, D. W. (2010). *Microaggressions and marginality: Manifestations, dynamics, and impact*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Sue, D.W. (2010) *Microaggressions in everyday life: race, gender, and sexual orientation*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Sue, D.W., Nadal, K., Capodilupo, C., Lin, A., Torino, G., & Rivera, D. (2008). Racial Microaggressions Against Black Americans: Implications for Counseling. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 86, 330-338.
- Sue, D. W., Lin, A. I., Torino, G., Capodilupo, C.M., & Rivera, D.P. (2009). Racial microaggressions and difficult dialogues on race in the classroom. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 15(2), 183-190.

Sue, D. W., Capodilupo, C. M., Torino, G. C., Bucceri, J. M., Holder, A. M., Nadal, K.

L., & Esquilin, M. (2007). Racial microaggressions in everyday life: Implications for counseling. *The American Psychologist*, 62(4), 271-286.