MEASURING MICROAGGRESSIONS:

ARE THERE DIFFERENCES IN ONLINE AND OFFLINE EXPERIENCES?

by

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I dedicate this work to my parents. Their continued support for my education is appreciated.
MEASURING MICROAGGRESSIONS:
ARE THERE DIFFERENCES IN ONLINE AND OFFLINE BEHAVIOR

by

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MEASURING MICROAGGRESSIONS:
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The video game industry has grown to be a significant part of people’s lives. This study investigates the experiences of microaggressions in online video game communities. A sample of 186 university students were surveyed about their personal experiences of microaggressions and video game use. Participants were asked to rate vignettes of microaggressions on how acceptable they found them. Results suggest the microaggression scenarios depicted in the vignettes are not considered acceptable and that there are differences in microaggression experiences across demographics. There is a discussion about the implications of what the findings mean regarding online video game use and microaggressions.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Almost half of all Americans play some type of video game (ESA, 2015; U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). Whether video games are played on a smart phone, a computer, or a PlayStation 4, there are frequent opportunities to communicate with other players verbally or with text applications. This capability allows people to both socialize online with friends they know offline and build online friendships. It also allows players to meet online only friends that are not a part of an offline social group. These connections can lead to prosocial cooperation (Barnett & Coulson, 2010) but what happens when they lead to negative experiences?

One form of negative experiences some people face offline comes in the subtle form of microaggressions (MA). Microaggressions are verbal or behavioral indignities experienced by marginalized groups in society (Sue et al., 2007). Microaggression experiences have been investigated in offline communities on college campuses and other social support networks (Galupo, Henise, & Davis, 2014; Gatson, 2015). Researchers have not focused on the experience of microaggressions in online video game communities. This may be neglecting a large portion of peer interactions, as the Entertainment Software Association (ESA) reports suggest a significant number of individuals play online video games to play with friends (ESA, 2016) and research has shown that microaggressions exist within friendship groups (Galupo et al., 2014). Online video game communities do exist as 54% of the most frequent gamers play with others and they average 6.5 hours online each week (ESA, 2016). This time spent online may introduce opportunities for negative peer interactions to occur.
It is important to further our understanding of online experiences because some individuals spend many hours socializing with friends online. There may be interactions within these groups that consist of microaggressions, which could lead to negative consequences offline. Experiencing microaggressions increases levels of stress and long-term victimization can result in mental health effects (Balsam, Molina, Beadnell, Simoni, & Walters, 2011). This paper briefly reviews the literature that demonstrates how the definition and typology of microaggressions has expanded from racial indignities to include gender and sexual orientation indignities. These subtle indignities have been found to affect those experiencing them and it truly does appear that words can hurt people. Researchers have found microaggressions to occur in different contexts: on college campuses (Woodford, Howell, Kulick, & Silverschanz, 2013), within peer groups (Galupo et al., 2014), in neighborhoods (Isom, 2016), and in environmental contexts (Sue et al., 2007). The focus to date has primarily been on how individuals experience microaggressions in offline communities. However, online communities exist and can become significant parts of people’s lives. There appears to be a gap in microaggression research and that is why this study investigates the potential for microaggressions to occur in a different context: online video game communities.

In a similar vein, research on the impact of video games has centered on the effect of video game content and there is little focus on the interactions between peers. Literature examining the effects of video game use shows positive (Ferguson, Olson, Kutner, & Warner, 2014; Olson, Kutner, and Warner, 2008) and negative outcomes (DeLisi, Vaughn, Gentile, Anderson, & Shook, 2013; Exelmans, Custers, & Van den Bulck, 2015). Some research has helped illuminate the online communities that exist (Barnett & Coulson, 2010) and the existence
of pro-social connections in those communities (Ferguson & Garza, 2011). Violent and graphic video game content may influence how an individual interacts with their peers. Graphic content may also affect the type of individual that plays the game as some people may select to play certain games. The current study will add to the video game literature by further investigating the experiences and interactions online video game players have with their peers, specifically if online video game players experience microaggressions.

The current study considers the importance of online and offline interactions. Such interactions between individuals are the foundation of human community. Online video game interactions have not been a primary area of interest for researchers and this neglects the importance of online interactions to certain people. Interactions between online video game players are important to study because online interaction and communication can be perceived to be as real as offline interactions.

The three key components to this study include: identifying microaggression experiences in regular offline communities and online video game communities; online video game interaction and use; and, individual perceptions of microaggressions. This study collects primary data from students at a large southwestern university in order to contribute to the existing breadth of knowledge of microaggressions. Analysis will examine experiences with gender, sexual orientation, and racial microaggressions and allow for a better understanding of how individual’s feel about these experiences. These vignettes measure an individual’s perception of microaggression behaviors, allowing this study to analyze the effect of individual experiences of microaggressions on the perception of microaggression behaviors. The results in chapter four help expand our knowledge of experiences of microaggressions in online video game
communities. The discussion section in chapter five covers potential implications for the prevalence of online microaggressions and the factors that may increase microaggression acceptance.
Defining Microaggressions

There are a variety of behaviors and language that can be categorized as a microaggression. Microaggressions have been defined as “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color” (Sue et al., 2007, p. 273). Sue et al. (2007) initially defined microaggressions as racial indignities, but subsequent research has shown gender and sexual orientation microaggressions do exist (Balsam et al., 2011; Galupo et al., 2014). Within this definition, there are three categories that microaggressions fall into: microassaults; microinsults; and, microinvalidations (Sue et al. 2007). Microassaults are explicit actions that are typically spurred on by conscious thought, microinsults are subtle snubs, and microinvalidations are actions that exclude a person’s feelings or experiences based on their race. Microaggressions exist beyond individual interactions and Sue et al. (2007) point to environmental microaggressions as other potential forms of indignities. A good example of this type of microaggression is when an Asian character in an American TV show speaks English with a heavy accent (Ong, Burrow, Fuller-Rowell, Ja, & Sue, 2013). Rather than detail many examples of microaggressions that could be experienced, it is helpful to refer back to the typology that Sue et al. (2007) developed.

There are 9 themes that exist in microaggressions and they can be found, along with examples, in the work done by Sue et al. (2007). The nine identified themes are: considering someone to be an alien in their own land because of their race, ascribing intelligence to a person
based on their race, making statements that indicate a person does not want to acknowledge race, assuming criminal status or dangerousness based on race, denying individual racist biases, making statements asserting race does not play a role in life successes, valuing a culture or communication style less than white culture, giving preferential treatment to a white person over a person of color, and macro-level indignities that can be seen on systemic or environmental levels. These different themes provide categories to differentiate between microaggressions; however, they all send the same message that someone is not as valuable because of their race.

Two studies (Balsam, Molina, Beadnell, Simoni, & Walters, 2011; Sarno & Wright, 2013) raise an interesting question about microaggressions: is a behavior or language only considered a microaggression if the individual experiencing the behavior or language perceives the action as an indignity? Sue et al. (2007) seem to suggest that the perception of the behavior does not matter. Words or phrases that are used to belittle marginalized members of society are microaggressions and microaggressions occur when a person says them. This does not necessarily align with how microaggressions have been measured in the past as studies have asked participants to report their personal perceptions of microaggressions (Balsam et al., 2011; Gatson, 2015). Still, self-report surveys can only capture individual perceptions of events. This makes it difficult to truly measure microaggression prevalence and the effects microaggressions have on people.

Sexual orientation microaggressions can be thought of in the same way as racial microaggressions: behaviors or language that makes someone feel devalued or insulted because of their sexual orientation. Balsam et al. (2011) developed a microaggression scale to measure the experiences of LGBT people of color. The authors point to the compounding stress that
LGBT minorities can face as a result of intersectionality. It is suggested that an LGBT person of color may be excluded from a gay bar because of their race, or they may have certain pressures from their culture that conflict their LGBT status. Balsam et al. (2011) constructed their measures using focus groups and a web-based survey to refine their measurement items. In a sample of 297 self-identified LGBT people of color, results suggest the experience of microaggressions is linked to depression and stress (Balsam et al., 2011).

The researchers go on to claim that discrimination inside of an ethnic community may have a greater negative effect on mental health than racism inside of an LGBT community (Balsam et al., 2011). Individuals may experience microaggressions in different ways depending on the construction of their social group. They also found bisexuals to experience lower levels of stress due to microaggressions compared to gay men and lesbian women (Balsam et al., 2011). In the LGBT Racism scale, 5 of the 18 items are about how the participant felt. The items ranged from “feeling misunderstood by White LGBT people” to “feeling like White LGBT people are only interested in you for your appearance” (Balsam et al., 2011, p. 169). Individual feelings are really individual perceptions. These items are not measuring objective occurrences: they are measuring a perception of behavior. Perceptions of behavior are not always the same and it is possible that a perceived microaggression to one individual is not perceived as a microaggression by another (Balsam et al., 2011). Microaggressions are often specific to the race or other marginalized demographic that they refer to.

A great example of a sexual orientation microaggression is when someone uses the phrase “that’s so gay” to suggest something is stupid or undesirable (Woodford et al., 2013). In this instance, “gay” is given a negative connotation, used to devalue something or someone over
a circumstance that may have nothing to do with homosexuality, and can offend someone that is part of the gay community. Woodford et al. (2013) surveyed students at a Midwestern public research university using an anonymous online survey to measure perceptions of campus climate. The survey included questions measuring the frequency of hearing and saying “that’s so gay” in the past year on campus. “That’s so gay” was heard 10 or more times by 63% of the participants and 65% of the sample reported saying “that’s so gay” at least once. Woodford et al. (2013) suggest the homo-negative phrase is a microaggression and is more than an insensitive comment. They go on to point to the need to reduce the use of “that’s so gay” because the language can be harmful to those in the gay community (Woodford et al., 2013). These comments are more than just insensitive words because they attribute negativity to a group in society that has been marginalized in the past.

In another study about the LGB community, Sarno and Wright (2013) investigated microaggression experiences by surveying 120 self-identifying bisexual, lesbian, and gay participants. They found that bisexual men and women were more likely to experience an “alien in own land” form of microaggression than gay men and lesbian women (Sarno & Wright, 2013). The “alien in own land” microaggression was measured by asking the frequency that participants experienced others assuming their sexual orientation to be heterosexual. The authors go on to suggest that this finding may be the result of bisexuals “blending in” easier than lesbians or gays and this is supported by previous literature (Balsam et al., 2011; Sarno & Wright, 2013). It is important to note that microaggressions do not have to be overtly racist, homophobic, or sexist behaviors or language as they are defined by the person who experiences the behavior. Indignities to one individual are not always an indignity to another. Subtle indignities like
ignoring a person of color’s idea in a group conversation may not be as recognizable as directly calling a homosexual “faggot” but it is still a microaggression.

A recent study explored this idea with a sample of 667 African Americans. Results pointed to experiences of microaggressions and discrimination as predictors of serious and violent offending (Isom, 2016). Rather than ask participants about experiencing each of the 9 typologies, survey questions asked participants if they were discriminated against in their neighborhood, outside of their neighborhood, when they first met someone, when they wanted service, and at other times (Isom, 2016). Discrimination can take many forms and participants that responded “yes” to the five questions did so because they perceived the behaviors they experienced as discrimination. Individuals may experience microaggressions without having face-to-face interactions with others. Microaggressions do not have to come from strangers; in fact, they are often directed towards friends in community groups (Galupo et al., 2014).

Subsequent research has extended the definition of microaggressions to include gender indignities commonly experienced by those in the LGBT community (Galupo et al., 2014). Galupo et al. (2014) surveyed 207 adults that identified as transgender, transsexual, or gender variant and found that transgender individuals experience the fewest microaggressions from other individuals that share the same identity as them. Transgender individuals experienced the most microaggressions from heterosexual cisgender friends. Heterosexual cisgender friends seemed to accept LGBTQ members the least, as these individuals often ended friendships and refused to recognize multiple genders and orientations (Galupo et al., 2014). In situations such as these, the authors suggest the existence of microaggressions within friendships may cause some

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1 An individual is considered cisgender when their gender identity is the same as their biological sex at birth.
disruption in the social support structure for transgender individuals). This disruption is problematic because members of the LGBTQ community often rely on friends for support more than family members. Members of the LGBTQ community shared with researchers that they felt LGBTQ friends “should have known better” than to microaggress against them (Galupo et al., 2014, p. 466). Microaggressions are more than just words, as they can damage social relationships and have other negative effects.

Table 2.1. Examples of Microaggressions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Microaggression Demographic</th>
<th>Microinsult</th>
<th>Microassault</th>
<th>Microinvalidation</th>
<th>Environmental</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Racial</td>
<td>A white person checking their wallet when walking past a black person. ¹</td>
<td>Asking a Latino what it is like to take care of other people’s lawns.</td>
<td>Belief that a person of color only got to their position because of affirmative action. ¹</td>
<td>Movies cast white actors in leading roles, regardless of appropriateness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Telling a workout partner to stop acting like a woman and to lift more weight.</td>
<td>Requiring a female co-worker to make coffee because she should be used to being in the kitchen.</td>
<td>Disregarding weight lifting advice from a female because of her gender.</td>
<td>University buildings are named after white heterosexual upper class males. ¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Orientation</td>
<td>Using the phrase “that’s so gay” when something undesirable happens.</td>
<td>Telling a gay friend to “Stop being so queer” when they share feelings.</td>
<td>Saying “No one can tell you’re gay” when a gay friend complains he experienced discrimination because of his orientation.</td>
<td>Gay TV characters are rarely serious characters and are used mainly for comic relief.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹Sue et al., 2007, p. 276

Table 2.1 shows examples of microinsults, microassaults, microinvalidations that can be categorized as racial, gender, or sexual orientation microaggressions. Environmental
microaggressions are also included in Table 2.1. The literature has established race, gender identity, and sexual orientation as demographic characteristics that can lead to microaggressions.

**Are Microaggressions Online?**

The literature reviewed has covered microaggression experiences in daily life in offline interactions with people. One study investigated perceptions of online microaggressions. Using Nadal’s 2011 Racial and Ethnic Microaggressions (REM) Scale, Williams, Oliver, Aumer, and Meyers (2016) investigated the relationship between offline experiences of microaggressions and online perceptions of microaggressions. The researchers asked 113 undergraduate students at a Northern England University to rate different racist online Internet memes and to report their personal experiences of microaggressions. Williams et al. (2016) found that those who experienced more racial microaggressions offline had higher ratings of offensiveness for racial internet memes. The authors suggest these participants remembered the negative experiences more frequently because they are more sensitive to the issue of race. It is important to understand the context in which individuals perceive microaggressions because of the negative mental health effects they can have (Balsam et al., 2011). The work done by Williams et al. (2016) asks a question similar to one that the current study seeks to investigate. Are there differences in offline and online experiences of microaggressions?

**Video Games**

Online communities exist in social media and they have a prominent place in the context of video games. Online video game play can involve interaction with other players through verbal or text communication. It is through these interactions that players can build partnerships to cooperate to achieve victory and maybe even become friends along the way. Online video
game communities exist and provide real pathways for positive and negative interactions (Barnett & Coulson, 2010). Research on microaggressions has focused on their occurrence in offline communities during interactions with others. It is very possible that online interactions with peers result in the experience of microaggressions. This study seeks to extend the knowledge of individual experiences of microaggressions to include individual experiences in online video game communities. There may be differences between peer interactions in offline communities and peer interactions in online communities.

Some research has found video game content to have negative effects on players. DeLisi et al. (2013) attempted to address the lack of research on the relationship between violent video game use, antisocial behavior, and delinquency in youth. The purpose of this study was to determine if youth with a predisposition to aggression are more vulnerable to the influence of violent content in video games. DeLisi et al. (2013) examined this relationship by using a nonprobability sample of 227 juvenile offenders placed in long-term residential facilities in Western Pennsylvania. Male and female youth were asked to self-report violent video game use and prior delinquent activity while also completing a psychopathy inventory for youth. The researchers measured violent video game use as the independent variable and created scales for the dependent variables, total delinquency and serious violence. Researchers also controlled for antisocial behavior with a psychopathy inventory that participants completed. Results showed the frequency of an individual’s violent video game use and how much an individual enjoyed playing violent video games were associated with total delinquency (DeLisi et al., 2013). This suggests that violent video game use may be considered a risk factor for delinquency.
Exelmans, Custers, and Van den Bulck (2015) investigated the possibility that video
game use could be a risk factor for delinquency. The researchers were specifically interested in
finding if violent video game use could be considered a significant risk factor. They collected
cross-sectional data with 3,372 student surveys from 129 Flemish schools. Exelmans et al.
(2015) measured a variety of risk factors including prior victimization, peer delinquency, gender,
age, and sensation seeking tendencies. The independent variables were violent and non-violent
video game use, along with the other risk factors, and delinquency was the dependent variable.
Boys in this sample were found to play all video games for nearly twice the amount of time per
week and more violent video games compared to girls. Results suggest that violent video game
use, as well as the other risk factors, is a risk factor for delinquency. Non-violent video game use
was not associated with delinquency. The specific content of video games matters and the
differences between violent and non-violent video games should be considered in future
research. Also, with boys more frequently playing violent video games than girls, and for a
longer duration, there should be a greater expected impact of violent video game use on male
adolescent behavior (Exelmans et al., 2015).

Other past research indicates that video game use does not promote deviance or
delinquency among players. Olson, Kutner, and Warner (2008) investigated the role of violent
video games in the development of adolescents. The purpose of this study was to learn how
adolescent males perceived the video games that they played. This included uncovering how
boys believed violent content in games influenced them, why they chose to play certain games,
and how boys felt video games affected social relationships. After emailing 2,500 employees of
the Partners HealthCare System, a purposive sample of 42 male adolescents aged 12 to 14 were
selected after screening for specific video game use. Data were recorded in small groups with a researcher leading 4 or 5 participants through a discussion of video game use. The independent variable was the adolescent’s perception of the video games they played and the dependent variable was how that perception influenced individual development. Participants played video games for feelings of autonomy, the adventure of a new game, socializing with others, coping with stress, and to master each game. Results also suggested that the positive effects of video games were related to genres of games and negative effects were related to specific content in games. Participants felt they could distinguish between violent video games and reality and were not concerned with developing aggressive or delinquent tendencies (Olson et al., 2008).

Ferguson et al. (2014) studied video game violence and youth aggression. The researchers hypothesized that the relationships between video game use, delinquency, and bullying were moderated by other variables. A cross-sectional sample of 1,254 middle school students in the mid-Atlantic United States completed self-report surveys. The individual’s aggression trait, parental involvement, social support structure, extracurricular activity, and exposure to video game violence were measured as the independent variables. The dependent variable included prior delinquency, prior bullying of others, aggressive behavior while angry, and the stress relief provided when playing video games. The results supported both hypotheses. An individual’s aggressive nature and levels of stress were found to predict delinquency and bullying (Ferguson et al., 2014). Although aggressive individuals were more likely to prefer violent video games, the exposure to violent content in these games did not significantly predict delinquency or bullying. Ferguson et al. (2014) suggest that these individuals may elect to play violent video games to relieve stress.
Regardless of the individual effects of video game content, online social networks exist in the spectrum of video games and there can be pro-social motivations for players to work with others in order to complete missions (Barnett & Coulson, 2010). Barnett and Coulson (2010) focused on mass-multiplayer online (MMO) games and the need to work with other characters and players to complete tasks. There are other video games that do not include expansive open worlds like MMO games but they still require teamwork to beat another group of players. Additionally, there are online video games that do not have “player versus player” action. Little Big Planet 3 is a video game that allows players to team up online to complete tasks set up by the game. “Multi-player versus computer” games require teamwork much like “player versus player” games. It is important to note that there are many online video games that do not include violence and instead promote teamwork. Online video game communities exist beyond violent games.

Ferguson and Garza (2011) worked to fill the gap in research of the ability of video games to increase community bonds and civic engagement for youth. Drawing from data gathered using a random digit dialing system; video game use was measured by asking 873 youth aged 12 to 17 years to report the top three games they regularly played. Then, ESRB ratings for those games were used to assign a level of violence to the game. This reduces the subjectivity of responses by avoiding asking about respondent’s perception of violence in video games (Ferguson & Garza, 2011). Online pro-social behavior was measured by asking youth about how often they helped other players and civic engagement was measured with five items that captured behaviors and five items that captured attitudes. Beginning with age and gender, Ferguson and Garza (2011) ran multiple regression analyses and added variables to their model.
Results indicated that action video game use was related to pro-social online behaviors for youth (Ferguson & Garza, 2011). These results are important because they suggest there can be net benefits for youth that play non-violent and violent video games.

We know that online video game communities do exist and that playing certain video games may even increase the potential for interactions with others. As these interactions increase, the potential for positive and negative experiences should increase much as it would in an offline community. The Entertainment Software Association (ESA) produces annual reports containing facts about the video game industry. Each report has information on the frequency of video game use and the types of games that were sold. The most recent reports have 155 million Americans playing video games with $23.5 billion spent purchasing video games and consoles in 2015 (ESA, 2015; ESA, 2016). According to the Entertainment Software Association (2016), the most frequent gamers spend an average of 6.5 hours each week playing video games online with others and up to 5 more hours playing video games offline with friends.

Fifty-four percent of the most frequent gamers are playing with other people and 51% of the most frequent gamers are playing a multiplayer mode at least once a week (ESA, 2016). The ESA (2016) reports that 53% of the most frequent gamers play to help them connect with their friends: a testament to the importance of online video game communities in player’s lives. It is interesting to note that the average video game player is 35 years old and that there are more women over the age of 18 that play games than there are boys under the age of 18 that play games (ESA, 2016). Of course, it is possible that boys under the age of 18 play substantially more often than women over the age of 18, but the popularity of smartphones has resulted in 36% of the most frequent gamers playing games on smartphones. It does no justice to online
video game communities to only think of them as existing on computers or dedicated home

gaming consoles.

This study will seek to expand the field of knowledge on the effects of online video game

use. Investigating online video game communities adds to the existing literature on the effects of

video game use. With measures in place for online video game use, it will be possible to see if

increases in video game play make it more likely for individuals to experience microaggressions.

The current study will explore the experiences and perceptions of microaggressions of online

video game users.
CHAPTER 3
CURRENT STUDY

The focus of this research is on individual experiences of microaggressions and individual perceptions of the acceptability of the use of microaggressions and not on the effects of video game content. The online interaction with other players is the primary focus of this study, but there is a measure in place for the type of video game content that is being played because content has been the focus of previous video game research. There is the potential for certain types of individuals to self-select into playing certain types of games. It will be interesting to see if players of more graphic content experience and perceive microaggressions the same way that players of less graphic content do.

Past research has shown that microaggressions occur between individuals in offline scenarios and that people perceive online material as microaggressions. Video game research suggests that players communicate and interact with each other in online communities. This current study seeks to further the understanding of microaggression experiences by asking participants to report their online video game use and their perception of peer behavior in their online and offline communities. This study will test four hypotheses. They are as follows:

H1: Microaggressions are experienced the same in online video game communities and offline communities. Individuals will report similar levels of frequency of experiencing microaggressions and they will also report similar levels of feeling uncomfortable or bothered by such behavior. This hypothesis suggests that people will perceive indignities online in the same way that they perceive them offline if they play online video games with people they know offline. There is the potential for online video game players to maintain their peer groups
between offline and online communities as many video game players play to be closer with friends (ESA, 2016).

H₂: Increases in time spent playing online video games will increase the reported frequency of experiencing microaggressions in online gaming communities. Longer periods of time online should create more opportunities to experience microaggressions.

H₃: Participants reporting playing video games with higher parental guidance ratings will be more bothered by the microaggressions they experience. The ESRB ratings of the top 3 video games played by participants will affect the type of person they interact with and the type of reaction each player has when they are not winning the game. Players may express their displeasure in the form of microaggressions.

H₄: Increases in the frequency of microaggression experiences will increase the rating of acceptability for microaggression behaviors displayed in vignettes. Perhaps a person comes to accept certain behaviors and language they more they are exposed to them.

Sample

A total of 186 students were recruited from a large university in the southwest to participate in an anonymous survey. Faculty members were emailed for permission to recruit students in the classroom so the sample is not randomly generated: it is a convenience sample. The sample is 43% white, 20% Hispanic, 13% Asian, 10% multi-racial, 6% black, and 6% other. Fifty eight percent of the sample is female, 40% is male, and 2% identified as non-binary or transgender. Undergraduate students compose 87% of the sample and 82% of all participants identified as heterosexual. Please refer to Table 4.1 for sample characteristics for each vignette sub-group and the total sample.
Survey Instrument

The research questions that this study asks are unique and there is not an existing dataset available for analysis. Testing the research questions required the development of a survey tool and the recruitment of participants. The goal of this study is to further the understanding of microaggressions experiences and this project steps beyond just the prevalence of microaggression experiences.

Dependent Variables

Acceptance of Microaggressions

The dependent variables in the current study are a measure of an individual’s acceptance of microaggressions. Six vignettes were developed with three pairs of vignettes demonstrating either ethnic, gender, and sexual orientation microaggressions. Within each pair, one vignette included an offline community scenario and one vignette included an online video game community scenario. The offline ethnic microaggression vignettes featured 3 characters playing basketball and character A tells character B that character B is only good at basketball because of his race. The online version of racial microaggressions was displayed with one character telling another to stick to doing math homework and playing a violin instead of playing video games. The sexual orientation vignettes featured a male hairdresser being told to stop complaining about his gay job and a video game player that cost his team a win being called gay. The offline gender vignette had a female being told not to lift too much weight in order to avoid looking like a man. The online video game community version of this had a character tell a female to stop causing them to lose their game and to stick to cleaning her house. The full versions of the can be found in the appendix.
The participants were asked to rate how acceptable they found the behavior in the vignette, with a score of 1 being completely unacceptable and a score of 10 being acceptable behavior. One study that focused on the perceived morality of sexual assault measured their vignette responses similarly. Bachman, Paternoster, and Ward (1992) gave participants a sexual assault scenario and asked them to rate the situation from 1 (not morally wrong) to 11 (very morally wrong). We removed the possibility for a middle/neutral option by utilizing a scale from 1 to 10 but the idea is similar: is the behavior portrayed in this vignette acceptable?

The vignettes were paired by the microaggression category and each survey was assigned one pair of vignettes so that a single participant would only respond to vignettes for one category of microaggressions. Before distributing the surveys, they were ordered so that each pair of vignettes would appear once in 3 surveys. The reason that the data collected does not consist of an equal number of surveys for each vignette is that the surveys were passed out based on this initial order but some students opted not to participate. The responses on the vignettes can be used as an outcome variable for this study. This creates six different dependent variables, two for each sub-group of the sample. The dependent variables measuring microaggression acceptance are as follows: Acceptance of offline race microaggressions, acceptance of offline gender microaggressions, acceptance of offline sexual orientation microaggressions, acceptance of online race microaggressions, acceptance of online gender microaggressions, and acceptance of sexual orientation microaggressions. Pogarsky (2004) used a similar method to investigate the effects of drunk driving experiences on the likelihood of driving drunk in a given scenario. Participants were asked to rate the likelihood of offending in a drunk driving scenario from 1 to
100 and they also responded to questions about their actual past experiences or drunk driving offenses.

**Personal Experience of Microaggressions**

Questions about individual experiences of microaggressions in the past month measured if a participant experienced a microaggression and the frequency of and level of discomfort from those microaggressions. Past research has measured offline experiences in different ways but two previously developed instruments were consulted for measuring experiences of microaggressions. The Student Life Experiences Scale asks participants to report the frequency of someone’s behavior making them feel uncomfortable, hurt, or devalued from 1 (never happened to me) to 5 (frequently) (Gatson, 2015). This was selected from a variety of other measures because it is broad enough to encompass the range of behaviors that may be experienced and it can be made more specific by adding components to it.

The sample does not consist solely of individuals from a marginalized group. Participants were asked screener questions to determine if they had experienced a friend saying something about their race, gender, or sexual orientation that made them feel devalued. If the response was yes, then two additional questions were asked. The first measures the frequency of microaggression experience by asking how often someone said something about their race, gender, or sexual orientation from hardly ever (1) to very often (4). The second measures how much the participant was bothered by someone saying something to make them feel devalued from not at all (1) to quite a bit (4). With the question left open by just asking if they felt devalued, examples of different types of microaggressions were given for ethnic, gender, and sexual orientation questions.
Examples for gender microaggressions included assumptions about abilities, preferences, or other characteristics based on gender identity (Sarno & Wright, 2013). Examples of racial microaggressions included assumptions about abilities, preferences, status, level of education, appearance, or other characteristics based on race (Nadal, 2011). Examples of sexual orientation microaggressions included the use of phrases or words such as “that’s so gay,” “no homo,” and asking you to act less lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer (Woodford et al., 2013; Woodford, Chonody, Kulick, Brennan, & Renn, 2015). Balsam et al. (2011) combined this two part approach in one question by asking if the behavior happened and if the behavior was bothersome. Sarno and Wright (2013) split the two in order to measure the frequency and the discomfort separately. They had participants rate the discomfort from not at all (1) to a great deal (5) (Sarno & Wright, 2013). This study finds it important to measure how much a person was bothered by their experience of microaggressions because of the negative mental health effects recurring experiences can cause (Balsam et al., 2011).

Independent Variables

The next set of measures was developed for the independent variables

Online Video Game Use

It was important to construct a valid measure for the time spent in online video game communities. The survey indicated that there needed to be an interaction between players that can include verbal communication through a headset, in game messaging applications, out of game messaging applications, or other forms of verbal or written communication. This was done

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2The word “faggot” would have been included in the current study’s survey as an example of a sexual orientation microaggression but the IRB did not allow the use of the word.
to ensure that we were measuring the time spent playing video games online with other people in online video game communities. Respondents were asked to report the number of hours they spend each week playing online video games with others and the number of hours they spend playing video games each week. To control for the method of video game play, participants were asked to list the top three devices and the top three video games they played. The ESRB ratings for these games were assigned points, 1 point for a rating of Everyone (E) or Everyone above the age of 10 (E10+), 2 points for a rating of Teen (T), and 3 points for a rating of Mature (M) (Entertainment Software Rating Board, 2016a; Entertainment Software Rating Board, 2016b). These were indexed so that a score of 9 indicates playing graphic video games and a score of 3 represents playing games without graphic content. Ferguson & Garza (2011) also used ESRB ratings for participants top played video games in order to measure the content of video games. This provides a more accurate measure for video game content compared to asking participants to rate the content of the video games they play as they may not perceive the content to be graphic.

Demographic Information

Demographic information was collected for this sample. Participants were asked to write in their age, gender identity, and sexual orientation. This was done to avoid making a participant feel devalued by omitting their identity or sexual orientation as response options. The Assistant Director of the campus Multicultural Center provided most of the response options for an individual’s race/ethnicity. The option of “Asian Indian” and “Middle Eastern” were combined with the other response options to measure race/ethnicity. Participants that marked multiple race options were coded as multi-racial.
Analysis

Simple descriptive statistics were produced for the sample demographics. Difference between means t-tests were used to determine if there are statistically significant differences between vignette scores. The vignette ratings had little variation and the result was essentially a truncated dependent variable instead of a continuous scale. A negative binomial regression was used with vignette scores as the dependent variable to account for the little variation in vignette scores. To investigate microaggression experiences in the online video game community, three logistic regression models will be used with sexual orientation, gender, and race microaggression experiences as outcome variables. Descriptive statistics for video game use are presented in the results chapter. The prevalence rates of microaggression experiences are displayed in the results section and will be discussed in the discussion chapter.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This chapter analyzes the collected data and presents sample statistics and a brief discussion of the tables of results. Table 4.1 displays the demographics and other characteristics for the sample population broken down by each vignette pair. There were very few respondents that did not identify as male or female. It may be worth noting that the race vignette sub-sample has the highest proportion of female and heterosexual participants and the lowest proportion of students enrolled in 12 or more credit hours. The gender vignette sub-sample has the highest proportion of non-heterosexual participants and the sexual orientation vignette sub-sample contains the largest proportion of Latino/Hispanic participants. Table 4.1 shows the diversity present in the sample, something to be expected from this particular university population as a whole due to the diversity reflected in the campus community. Table 4.1 also shows that less than a quarter of the sample population lives on campus and almost two of every three participants work.

It is important to consider the effect of the number of females in the sample. After consulting Table 4.2, we can see that females were overwhelmingly the ones to experience gender microaggressions and all of those identifying as a non-traditional gender experienced a gender microaggression. It is very possible that the nature of online interactions prevented gender from being known by other players. That could be why females experience gender microaggressions in offline situations at a higher rate than in online video game communities. Non-males in the sample may have experienced gender microaggressions at a lower rate online because they are not visible to the other individual’s they are playing with. Of the 77 individuals
that reported engaging in online video game communities, there were only 22 that experienced a
gender microaggression.

Table 4.2 shows the different prevalence rates for gender microaggression experiences
for each gender. Table 4.3 displays the mean vignette ratings for each survey sub-sample.
Overall, the vignettes received very low scores. A score of one is equivalent to the behavior
being completely unacceptable and none of the vignettes averaged a score above three. The
results of difference in means tests suggest that there is a statistically significant difference
between the offline and online ratings for the sexual orientation and gender vignettes. This
means that offline sexual orientation and gender microaggressions were rated as more acceptable
than online sexual orientation and gender microaggressions. Results of one-way ANOVA testing
suggest there is a statistically significant difference for the vignette scores for the offline and
online sexual orientation microaggressions, online racial microaggressions, and online gender
microaggressions by gender. Table 4.4 shows the results of negative binomial regression analysis
with each vignette score as a dependent variable. Gender, race, sexual orientation, and age were
the independent variables in each model. The gender variable was coded as a dummy variable for
the regression analysis with male being equal to one. White was coded as one with all other
ethnicities equal to zero. Hispanic was also coded so that Latino/Hispanics were coded as one
and all other ethnicities were coded as zero. Sexual orientation is a dummy variable with
heterosexual equal to zero. Age is a continuous variable. The results in Table 4.4 suggest that
being male increased acceptance for certain microaggressions.

Even with this finding, males were not typically considering the behavior displayed in the
vignettes to be acceptable as nothing points to males scoring the vignettes between six and ten.
Table 4.1. Descriptive Sample Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Sexual Orientation Vignettes (n=63)</th>
<th>Gender Vignettes (n=63)</th>
<th>Race Vignettes (n=60)</th>
<th>Total (n=186)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average Age</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>24.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>42.9</td>
<td>43.6</td>
<td>33.9</td>
<td>40.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>57.1</td>
<td>53.2</td>
<td>64.4</td>
<td>58.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Orientation (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>82.5</td>
<td>75.4</td>
<td>89.3</td>
<td>82.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homosexual</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White/European</td>
<td>38.1</td>
<td>47.6</td>
<td>45.8</td>
<td>43.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaskan Native</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawaiian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian Indian</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino/Hispanic</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Eastern</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-Racial</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live on campus (%)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>24.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 or more credit hours (%)</td>
<td>90.5</td>
<td>83.6</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>84.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Classification (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>17.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>30.1</td>
<td>39.7</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>33.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Student</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works (%)</td>
<td>60.3</td>
<td>63.9</td>
<td>62.7</td>
<td>62.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sexual orientation was found to be a significant predictor for increases in acceptance for online sexual orientation microaggressions. The results in Table 4.4 suggest that heterosexual males are more accepting of sexual orientation microaggressions.

### Table 4.4. Negative Binomial Regression Results With Vignette Scores as an Outcome

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Offline Vignettes</th>
<th>Online Vignettes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Race</td>
<td>Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>0.363</td>
<td>0.241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>0.398</td>
<td>-0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>0.062</td>
<td>0.104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Orientation</td>
<td>0.399</td>
<td>0.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.013</td>
<td>0.021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.097</td>
<td>-0.132</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Statistically significant when p<.05

### Table 4.3. Microaggression Vignette Mean Acceptability Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sexual Orientation Vignettes (n=63)</th>
<th>Gender Vignettes (n=63)</th>
<th>Race Vignettes (n=60)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Offline Vignette Rating</td>
<td>2.603*</td>
<td>2.365*</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Vignette Rating</td>
<td>2.349*</td>
<td>1.603*</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Denotes statistically significant difference when p<.05

Table 4.5 displays the characteristics of video game use by participants. Nearly three-fourths of the sample reports some video game use. There were 140 participants out of 186 that reported video game use with 104 of 140 playing offline video games, and 77 of 140 playing online video games. In this sample, 53.5% of video game players engage in online video game
use. On average, online video game players spend more than 7 hours online each week. Seven
ty five percent of video game players play offline video games for more than 5 hours each week. It
is important to note that the percentages in Table 4.5 may be greater than 100% when summed
because some participants play online and offline video games. This should also be considered
for devices used as many video game players listed more than one device in their top three
devices used.

Comparing the devices used to the ESA (2016) report may help in understanding the
video game users in this sample. The ESA reports that the most frequent video game users play
on a computer (56%), home gaming console (53%), smartphone (36%), wireless device (31%)
and a handheld gaming console (17%) (ESA, 2016). Table 4.5 shows this sample has a higher
percentage of home console and smart phone users than the United States as a whole. The
sample also averages nearly one hour more per week playing online video games compared to
the 6.5 hours U.S. gamers play (ESA, 2016). It is interesting to point out that 28% of the top
three video games played received an ESRB rating of Mature while only 11% of games rated by
the ESRB receive such a rating (ESA, 2016). It is equally important to note that 50% of the top
20 selling games video games in the U.S. and 30% of the top 20 selling computer games in the
U.S. were rated M. The high number of games without an ESRB rating is due to the high number
of smart phone users as most smart phone games are not rated by the ESRB.

Results from a one group versus population means test suggest this sample was not found
to play online video games more frequently than the sample used for the ESA (2016) report. We
can then look at Table 4.6 and see that there are differences between online video game players
and those that do not play online video games. There is a statistically significant difference
Table 4.5. Video Game Use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sexual Orientation Vignettes (n=63)</th>
<th>Gender Vignettes (n=63)</th>
<th>Race Vignettes (n=60)</th>
<th>Total (n=186)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Video Game Users (n=140)</td>
<td>71.4%</td>
<td>74.6%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play online (%)</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>57.5</td>
<td>48.9</td>
<td>53.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Hours/week online</em></td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>7.3*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play offline (%)</td>
<td>75.5</td>
<td>79.6</td>
<td>70.2</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Hours/week offline</em></td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Devices Used (%) (n=140)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Computer</td>
<td>51.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smart Phone</td>
<td>53.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tablet</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handheld Console</td>
<td>24.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Gaming</td>
<td>62.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Console</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Video Game ESRB Ratings</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Everyone</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyone 10 and up</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teen</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mature</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No ESRB Rating</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*not found different from the ESA (2016) average of 6.5 at a level of statistical significance

in the gender, sexual orientation, and race of online video game players as there are higher percentages of males, heterosexuals, and whites in the online video game playing group. Table 4.6 shows that the typical gamer in our sample was a straight, white male.

A closer look at online video game player’s experiences with microaggressions required the use of a logistic regression model. The same dichotomous independent variables used for the negative binomial regression were included in the logistic regression models and online video game time (in hours/week) was also included. The results in Table 4.7 suggest that males are 71.3% less likely to experience gender microaggressions, and whites are 84.6% less likely to
Table 4.6. Differences Between Online Video Game Users and Non-Online Video Game Users

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Online Video Game Players</th>
<th>Not Online Video Game Players</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>63.6%**</td>
<td>23.8%**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>87.8%*</td>
<td>77%*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>50.6%*</td>
<td>36.3%*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*statistically significant when p<.10
**statistically significant when p<.05

The time spent playing online video games was not associated with an increased chance for experiencing any microaggression online.

Table 4.7. Logistic Regression Results For Online Video Game Players and Their Microaggression Experiences – Odds Ratios

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variables</th>
<th>Sexual Orientation</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>.287*</td>
<td>1.338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>0.421</td>
<td>0.598</td>
<td>.154*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>0.275</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>0.286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Orientation</td>
<td>0.206</td>
<td>0.595</td>
<td>1.367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>0.939</td>
<td>0.972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Video Game Time</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>1.057</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.978</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>0.624</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*statistically significant when p<.05

Comparing Table 4.8 and Table 4.9 suggest it is easier to avoid racial and gender microaggressions in online video game communities. The higher rate of sexual orientation microaggression experience could be due to the homonegative terms used in some gaming circles. It is possible that the perpetrators of online sexual orientation microaggressions do not
know the other person is part of the LGBT community and they use homonegative phrases throughout a game with no intent to insult another player’s orientation.

Table 4.8. Prevalence of Online Microaggression Experiences for Online Video Game Players

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sexual Orientation</th>
<th>Racial</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Total n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online Video Game Players</td>
<td>30.26%</td>
<td>26.32%</td>
<td>23.68%</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.9. Prevalence of Offline Microaggression Experiences for Non-Video Game Players

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sexual Orientation</th>
<th>Racial</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Total n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-Video Game Players</td>
<td>19.61%</td>
<td>49.02%</td>
<td>35.29%</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We do see in Table 4.8 homosexuals, bisexuals, and those of other sexual persuasions experience higher rates of sexual orientation microaggressions in online settings than in offline communities.

Table 4.10. Prevalence Rate of Sexual Orientation Microaggression Experiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Microaggression Experienced</th>
<th>Offline</th>
<th>Online</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>12.77%</td>
<td>17.82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homosexual</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bisexual</td>
<td>58.3%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Racial and ethnic microaggressions were not experienced equally across races. Table 4.11 shows that people of color experienced ethnic microaggressions at a higher rate in offline scenarios than in online video game communities. We see one third of Blacks experiencing an offline racial microaggression but only one eighth of Blacks experienced an online racial microaggression.
Table 4.11. Prevalence Rate of Racial Microaggression Experiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Offline</th>
<th>Online</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White/European (%)</td>
<td>16.05</td>
<td>11.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American (%)</td>
<td>33.33</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaskan Native (%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian (%)</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>41.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian Indian (%)</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino/Hispanic (%)</td>
<td>41.67</td>
<td>16.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Eastern (%)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-Racial (%)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>45.45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The results show the sample as a whole disapproves of microaggression behaviors with none of the vignettes having an average score above three on a ten point scale. The race vignettes received the lowest scores which could be due to more people being aware of racism as an issue. Participants rated the sexual orientation microaggressions as more acceptable than racial or gender microaggressions, although the scores still indicate the behavior is not acceptable. It is possible that people are not as sensitive to derogatory remarks about sexual orientation, especially on college campuses. Woodford et al. (2013) did find 65% of college students in their study to have used the phrase “that’s so gay” at least once within the past year. This could be related to Woodford’s findings of 90% of respondents hearing “that’s so gay.” It would not be surprising if most of the sample had heard the phrase “that’s so gay” as Woodford et al. (2013) found 90% of their sample to hear the phrase on a college campus in the last year.

During my personal experience in online video game communities I have heard many homonegative terms and phrases including: faggot, cocksucker, queer, and that’s so gay. Sarno and Wright (2013) suggest it is easier for bisexuals to blend into their communities than homosexuals but Table 4.10 shows a higher percent of bisexuals report experiencing a sexual orientation microaggression than homosexuals. Heterosexuals also report experiencing orientation microaggressions and this could be because of homonegative terms gamers use. The rate of sexual orientation microaggression experiences for non-video game players is lower than that of gender and race microaggression experience. This difference could be because it is harder to discern an individual’s orientation by appearance than it is to discern race or gender. It is
important to remember that there are far fewer non-heterosexual individuals in this sample than there are females or people of color and this could also affect these prevalence rates.

The results from this study support Gatson’s (2015) findings that microaggressions are experienced differently across race and orientation. We found that every minority group, except for Asian Indians, experienced higher percentages of racial microaggressions than Caucasians. What implications do the results of this study have? What do they mean? The vignettes were scored as unacceptable behavior; however, two of the offline vignettes were rated as more acceptable than their online counterparts. Are gender and sexual orientation microaggressions actually more acceptable offline than online? Perhaps the nature of the vignettes impacts this finding. The scenarios featured peer groups and individuals that seemed to know one another. It is possible that face to face microaggressions were considered more acceptable because they do not occur behind the protection of the internet. The internet can often provide anonymity to users and this can work in two ways.

First, individuals can believe their identity is protected and feel free to verbally assault and harass other online video game players. Second, the prevalence rates shown in Tables 4.2, 4.10, and 4.11 seem to suggest that internet anonymity acts as a protective factor; however, there needs to be further research and replication using a random sampling method before making any definitive conclusions. It becomes much more difficult to discern another individual’s gender, race, or sexual orientation if you are playing online video games with them and you do not interact with them face to face. Tables 4.8 and 4.9 would also suggest race and gender microaggressions are experienced more frequently offline than they are online and this would corroborate the findings from Table 4.6. If straight, white males are the dominant demographic
for online video game players, then it theoretically makes sense for this group to experience fewer microaggressions than non-video game players. Microaggressions are experienced by those in marginalized groups and, disregarding religious beliefs or heritage, a heterosexual, white male does not fall into a marginalized group.

Still, straight, white males reported experiencing behavior and language that made them feel devalued about their race, gender, and orientation. This raises questions about microaggressions as Sue et al. (2007) have clearly defined them as pointed insults or invalidations of marginalized members of society. The current study is largely perceptual in how it measures microaggressions, as the studies outlined in the literature review are also asking for personal perceptions of experiences. It seems as if there is a disjunction in the definition and existence of microaggressions as Sue et al. (2007) seem to point to the use of phrases as microaggressions and others suggest the experience of microaggressions as more meaningful for determining if a microaggression occurred. Is it a microaggression for one straight, white male to call another straight, white male gay if nobody else hears it? The term “microaggressions” should be restrained to behavior or language that exudes racist, homophobic, or misogynistic ideas and beliefs. It should not be extended to cover minor insults and mildly offensive language. At some level, mildly offensive language should be considered just that: mildly offensive. Continued pursuits to label such language as microaggressions may prevent some individuals from being able to express their thoughts.

It is still important to recognize offensive behavior and language that should be considered as microaggressions. The vignette scores do show there is no acceptance for such behavior in the sample population. Still, as some studies open the definition of microaggressions
to be more inclusive, researchers should be critical about the consequences of extending the definition of what constitutes a microaggression. Online microaggressions should be held to a critical standard as well as it can be extremely difficult for two people to know one another’s race, sexual orientation, or gender if they only interact with each another online.

**Limitations and Future Research**

The sample used was a convenience sample and it is possible that social desirability bias influenced the vignette ratings. Participants may have felt pressure to rate microaggression behavior as unacceptable because the survey was distributed in a university classroom setting. Perhaps outside influence to ascribe to a “politically correct” culture skewed the vignette ratings towards not acceptable.

Future research can broaden the scope of online communities to include social media platforms and internet forums. It would be interesting to see if microaggressions are equally prevalent across different forms of online social interaction. The sample for this study was not purposively collected to represent marginalized groups in society. Future research should seek two different types of samples. One type of sample should consist solely of those belonging to a marginalized group for sexual orientation, race, or gender. The offline and online experiences of this sample could be compared. The other type of sample would be composed of online video game players. The goal would be to determine differences in microaggression experiences for online video game players across race, gender, and sexual orientation.

This study sought to overview the current literature on microaggressions and video games. The results of this study contribute to the existing field of knowledge of online video game use and microaggression experiences. Sampling concerns limit the implication of findings,
but points in the discussion section should be tested in future research. Still, this paper presents the prevalence rates of online microaggression experiences for online video game users and discusses the potential sources of differences that were found. Subsequent research should include discussions of the difficulty in measuring microaggressions and individual’s perceptions of them as this can present difficulties. Online video game use did not predict experiences of microaggressions in this study, but microaggressions were still found to occur in online video game communities.
APPENDIX

Ethnic Microaggression Vignettes

Mike, Jake, and Alex are playing basketball at the park. Mike is the best of the group at playing basketball. Jake tells Mike that he is only good at basketball because of his race.

Not Acceptable O O O O O O O O O O Acceptable

Mike, Jake, and Alex are playing video games together online. Alex is not as good at playing video games as Mike and Jake and he causes them to lose their game. Jake tells Alex that he should stick to doing math homework and playing his violin.

Not Acceptable O O O O O O O O O O Acceptable

Gender Microaggression Vignettes

Mike, Jake, and Alexa are exercising at the gym. Alexa lifts weights with Mike and Jake. Mike tells Alexa not to lift too much weight otherwise she will look like a man.

Not Acceptable O O O O O O O O O O Acceptable

Mike, Jake, and Alexa are playing video games together online. Alexa is not as good at playing video games as Mike and Jake and she causes them to lose their game. Jake tells Alexa that she is bad at video games and that she should stick to cleaning her house.

Not Acceptable O O O O O O O O O O Acceptable
Sexual Orientation Vignettes

Mike, Jake, and Alex are eating lunch together. Alex begins talking about the annoying customers he deals with as a hairdresser. Mike tells Alex to stop complaining about his gay job.

Mike, Jake, and Alex are playing video games together online. Alex is not as good at playing video games as Mike and Jake and he causes them to lose their game. Mike calls Alex gay for being bad at video games.

Video Game Use: The next set of questions asks about your video game use. Please mark the circle that best corresponds to your answer. Write in your response for questions with a blank space.

1. Do you play video games? (video game play can include game play on a computer, smartphone, tablet, handheld gaming device like a Nintendo 3DS or previous versions, home gaming console like an Xbox One or PlayStation4, or other devices used for video game play)
   O Yes          O No

If no, please skip to question number 9 on the bottom of page 5 and leave questions 2-8 blank. If yes, please continue to answer the remaining questions in this section.

2. Do you play video games online with other people? (There must be some interaction between you and other people online. This can include verbal communication through a
headset, in game messaging applications, out of game messaging applications, or other forms of verbal or written communication.)

O Yes  O No

If yes, please answer the following:

a. How many hours each week do you play video games online with other people?  
   _______  O N/A

3. Do you play video games alone? (while you play you do not have any interaction or communication with other people)  
O Yes  O No

If yes, please answer the following:

a. How many hours each week do you play video games offline by yourself?  
   _______  O N/A

4. Please list the top 3 devices that you spend the most time playing video games on.  
   ____________________________
   ____________________________
   ____________________________

5. Please list the top 3 games that you spend the most time playing.  
   ____________________________
   ____________________________
   ____________________________

The next section of questions asks about your experiences playing online video games with friends. Please answer the following questions about your experiences playing video games in the past month:

6. When you are playing video games with friends online, has someone said something about your sexual orientation that made you feel devalued? (Examples can include
phrases or words such as “that’s so gay”, “no homo”, asking you to “act less lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer”, or other phrases)

O Yes  O No

If yes, please answer the following two questions:

a. When you are playing video games with friends online, how often does someone say something about your sexual orientation that makes you feel devalued? (Examples can include phrases or words such as “that’s so gay”, “no homo”, asking you to “act less lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer”, or other phrases)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N/A</th>
<th>Hardly Ever</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Very Often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b. When you are playing video games with friends online, and someone says something about your sexual orientation that makes you feel devalued, how much does it bother you? (Examples can include phrases or words such as “that’s so gay”, “no homo”, asking you to “act less lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer”, or other phrases)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N/A</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>A Little</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Quite a bit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. When you are playing video games with friends online, has someone said something about your gender that made you feel devalued? (Examples can include assumptions about your abilities, preferences, or other characteristics based on your gender identity)

O Yes  O No

If yes, please answer the following two questions:

a. When you are playing video games with friends online, how often does someone say something about your gender that makes you feel devalued? (Examples can include assumptions about your abilities, preferences, or other characteristics based on your gender identity)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N/A</th>
<th>Hardly Ever</th>
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<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b. When you are playing video games with friends online, and someone says something about your gender that makes you feel devalued, how much does it bother you? (Examples can include assumptions about your abilities, preferences, or other characteristics based on your gender identity)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N/A</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>A Little</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Quite a bit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8. When you are playing video games with friends online, has someone said something about your cultural heritage that made you feel devalued? (Examples can include assumptions about your abilities, preferences, status, level of education, appearance or other characteristics based on your cultural heritage)

O Yes     O No

If yes, please answer the following two questions:

a. When you are playing video games with friends online, how often does someone say something about your cultural heritage that makes you feel devalued? (Examples can include assumptions about your abilities, preferences, status, level of education, appearance or other characteristics based on your cultural heritage)

N/A        Hardly Ever       Rarely       Sometimes       Very Often

b. When you are playing video games with friends online, and someone says something about your cultural heritage that makes you feel devalued, how much does it bother you? (Examples can include assumptions about your abilities, preferences, status, level of education, appearance or other characteristics based on your cultural heritage)

N/A        Not at all       A Little       Somewhat       Quite a bit

This next section asks questions about your offline experiences with friends. Please answer the following questions about your experiences spending time with friends in the past month:

9. When you are with friends, has someone said something about your sexual orientation that made you feel devalued? (Examples can include phrases or words such as “that’s so gay”, “no homo”, asking you to “act less lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer”, or other phrases)

O Yes       O No

If yes, please answer the following two questions:

a. When you are with friends, how often does someone say something about your sexual orientation that makes you feel devalued? (Examples can include phrases or words such as “that’s so gay”, “no homo”, asking you to “act less lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer”, or other phrases)
b. When you are with friends, and someone says something about your sexual orientation that makes you feel devalued, how much does it bother you? (Examples can include phrases or words such as “that’s so gay”, “no homo”, asking you to “act less lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer”, or other phrases)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N/A</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>A Little</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Quite a bit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. When you are with friends, has someone said something about your gender that made you feel devalued? (Examples can include assumptions about your abilities, preferences, or other characteristics based on your gender identity)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>O Yes</th>
<th>O No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

If yes, please answer the following two questions:

a. When you are with friends, how often does someone say something about your gender that makes you feel devalued? (Examples can include assumptions about your abilities, preferences, or other characteristics based on your gender identity)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N/A</th>
<th>Hardly Ever</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Very Often</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b. When you are with friends, and someone says something about your gender that makes you feel devalued, how much does it bother you? (Examples can include assumptions about your abilities, preferences, or other characteristics based on your gender identity)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N/A</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>A Little</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Quite a bit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. When you are with friends, has someone said something about your cultural heritage that made you feel devalued? (Examples can include assumptions about your abilities, preferences, status, level of education, appearance or other characteristics based on your cultural heritage)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>O Yes</th>
<th>O No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

If yes, please answer the following two questions:
a. When you are with friends, how often does someone say something about your cultural heritage that makes you feel devalued? (Examples can include assumptions about your abilities, preferences, status, level of education, appearance or other characteristics based on your cultural heritage)

N/A  Hardly Ever  Rarely  Sometimes  Very Often
O    O        O     O        O

b. When you are with friends, and someone says something about your cultural heritage that makes you feel devalued, how much does it bother you? (Examples can include assumptions about your abilities, preferences, status, level of education, appearance or other characteristics based on your cultural heritage)

N/A  Not at all  A Little  Somewhat  Quite a bit
O    O        O     O        O

Demographic Questions: Write in your responses for questions that have a blank space and fill in the circle that best matches your response to questions with response options.

12. Please fill in your gender identity

13. Please fill in your sexual orientation

14. Please write in your age

15. What year are you in college?
O Freshman  O Sophomore  O Junior  O Senior  O Graduate Student

16. Which option best describes your cultural heritage? Please check all that apply.
O White/European
O Black/African American
O American Indian/Alaskan Native
O Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
O Asian
O Asian Indian
O Latino/Hispanic
O Middle Eastern

17. Please check the circle that best identifies your living situation as a student.
O I commute to campus  O I live on campus (apartments or dorms)

18. Are you enrolled in 12 or more hours of classes at UT Dallas?
O Yes  O No

19. Do you work?
O Yes  O No

You have completed this survey. Thank you for your time and participation. You may place the survey into the manila envelope and turn it in. If you have any questions or concerns, please ask the researcher and feel free to contact anyone listed on the front page of this survey. Please feel free to remove and keep the front page of the survey.
REFERENCES


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Jordan Riddell is from Allen, Texas and graduated with a BA in Criminology from UT Dallas in 2015. He will graduate from The University of Texas at Dallas with a Master of Science in Criminology in May 2017. Jordan has been accepted to the Criminology PhD program at UT Dallas.
CURRICULUM VITAE

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EDUCATION

M.S. May 2017, The University of Texas at Dallas, Criminology
B.A. December 2015, The University of Texas at Dallas, Criminology, Magna Cum Laude

WORK EXPERIENCE

January 2017 – Present Graduate Teaching Assistant
The University of Texas at Dallas
Criminology Program
School of Economic, Political, and Policy Sciences

2014 – 2016 Research Assistant
The University of Texas at Dallas
CHOICES Grant

Summer 2016 Congressional Intern
Pete Sessions’ Congressional Office
Washington, DC

Summers 2011 – 2015 Lead Sales Associate
Leslie’s Swimming Pool Supplies

ACADEMIC PROJECTS


Editor of the UT Dallas Criminology Program Newsletter (Spring 2016 – Present)
AWARDS & HONORS

The University of Texas System – Archer Fellow (Summer 2016)
UT Dallas – Criminology Academic Excellence Scholarship Award Winner (2016)
UT Dallas – Academic Honors Scholarship: Full Tuition, Housing Stipend (2012-2016)
UT Dallas – Undergraduate Research Scholar Award (2015)
UT Dallas – Collegium V Honors College Program (2012-2015)