

## Is There Internalized Oppression Among Black Sexual Minority Women?

By: Alexeis Palonis

Minority groups have played a significant role in promoting social stability and peace after being oppressed for many years in society. However, there seems to be internalized oppression found in racial minorities and sexual minorities. The specific problem is that there has been a history of extreme internalized discrimination against black sexual minority women. It is understandable for this to come off as extremely odd; most people assume minorities who are fighting the same oppressor will support each other instead of dividing one another. Unfortunately, this does not seem to be the case, both from observation in the media and by experience. Elected officials displayed hateful and provocative anti-Blackness. Tremendous negative portrayals had been shown in the media with black sexual minority women, and there were historically maintained systems of racial oppression involving black sexual minorities in general. Because of this, I decided to dig deeper into this research. With that being said, are we harsher on black sexual minority women than white sexual minority women?

### Literature Review

Jackson et al. (2020) conducted a study on the intersectional perspectives on stigma-related experiences in black sexual minorities. Their stated purpose was to examine lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer (LGBQ) black Americans' daily experiences. They aimed to focus on the participants' experiences based on their race and sexual orientation. The researchers hypothesized that black sexual minorities' experience in stigma-related stress with racism and homophobia would heavily affect their psychological well-being. In their study, they sampled 131 black LGBQ participants in the United States, with their ages ranging from 18-71 years old. 42% identified as gay, 32.1% identified as lesbian or queer, and 26% identified as bisexual. The participants were invited to partake in a daily diary investigation in which they would be paid for participating. Participants were expected to log into a brief Internet survey once a day for 7 continuous days for the procedure. The participants received consistent messages at 6:00 PM ET with individual survey links that remained active until 5:59 PM ET the next day. The message asked for the participants to complete the survey before heading to bed (Jackson, Mohr, Sarno, Kindahl, & Jones, 2020).

On the first day of the procedure, the participants completed an online informed consent form and a demographic questionnaire before moving on with the main study, which was expected to be completed every evening. The daily surveys asked the participants to answer the questions regarding any negative intersectional experiences and positive intersectional experiences within the last 24 hours. Towards the end of the week, 11.4% of negative intersectional experiences were recorded on 97 study days, and 31.0% of positive intersectional experiences were recorded on 263 study days. Their study concluded the significance of amending existing stigma-related stress structures to raise awareness of the ignored and overlooked intersectional struggles of black lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer individuals. Because of this, their hypothesis was supported (Jackson, Mohr, Sarno, Kindahl, & Jones, 2020).



Brassel et al. (2020) conducted a study on intersectionality and workplace sexual harassment among black sexual minority women. Their stated purpose was to further investigate the experienced sexual harassment in the workplace with black sexual minority women. The researchers hypothesized that black sexual minority women are 2 times more likely to encounter sexual harassment in the workplace than white women. They sampled 19 black lesbians who were between the ages of 26 and 68, predominantly middle-class and highly educated. The study explored investigations of workplace stress because of race, sexual orientation, and sex/gender. One participant in their model study stated being in a “sexually tinged” atmosphere where men felt that she only existed for their mere pleasure. Many more participants in their study stated to have experienced similar feelings from white males, but they also stated uncertainty about which identity was being marginalized the most. This means they were unsure if they were being targeted because they were a woman, because they were a sexual minority, or because of some other reason. (Brassel, Davis, Jones, Miller-Tejada, Thorne, & Areguin, 2020).

The results of this study showed that sexual harassment research should not exclude intersectionality. The researchers emphasized that it is crucial to examine beyond the experience of having various identities and how divided social systems of oppression heavily affect black sexual minority women and their ability to succeed in the workplace. This will have great potential to apprise interventions, policy, and clinical work that will support black sexual minorities and support systemic social transformation. Their model study served as a reminder that by examining the intersections of gender with sexuality and race, sexual harassment research can be more accurately described and predicted. (Brassel, Davis, Jones, Miller-Tejada, Thorne, & Areguin, 2020).

Researchers Pender, Hope, and Riddick (2019) conducted a research study to determine how a connection between the black community and the black lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and queer (LGBTQ) community is crucial because it could be a pathway to engage in more social justice for black freedom. The purpose of their study was to grasp the role of the racial identity of black LGBTQ youths and the black LGBTQ community in black activism. The researchers hypothesized that grasping nationalist and marginalized minority ideologies would help restore the relationship between the black community and the black LGBTQ youth community (Pender, Hope, & Riddick, 2019).

The methods of this study included 142 self-identified black LGBTQ individuals, ranging between the ages of 14-29. The researchers measured black community activism orientation through the Black Community Activism Orientation Scale, which estimated the extent to which the participants would engage in activism for the black community in the future. The scale contained three subscales: low-risk, high-risk, and formal political. The low-risk subscale meant the extent to which the individual approaches social justice action for the black community in a passive way (i.e., buying a poster, t-shirt, or merchandise that supports the black community). High-risk meant the degree to which the individual approaches social justice action for the black community in a more visible, assertive, and risky way (i.e., blocking roads to buildings or public areas with their body for a cause toward the black community). The formal political subscale

meant the extent in which an individual approaches political actions for the black community (i.e., keeping track of the views of members of congress) (Pender, Hope, & Riddick, 2019).

The results of this study revealed that participants were unlikely to engage in high-risk activism in the future; participants were just as likely and unlikely to engage in low-risk activism and formal political activism. The low levels of activism for the black community could be linked to the black LGBTQ youth community not feeling accepted in the black community. Therefore, their hypothesis was supported. The outcome of this study demonstrated that it is important for the black community to set aside mainstream heterosexism and form a strong connection with black LGBTQ youth in order to encourage more engagement in sociopolitical action for the black community. Doing this might also help the black community become more accepting and supportive of the black LGBTQ community and black LGBTQ youth (Pender, Hope, & Riddick, 2019).

Researchers Sutter and Perrin (2016) conducted a study to determine the effects discrimination has on the mental health of LGBTQ people of color and increase the comprehension of intersectionality among LGBTQ people of color. The researchers hypothesized that the effects of LGBTQ-based discrimination and racism on mental health would be the primary direction for interventions to reduce suicidal ideation among LGBTQ people of color (Sutter & Perrin, 2016).

In order to obtain data for the study, the researchers recruited 200 LGBTQ individuals to partake in an online survey based in the United States that focused on LGBTQ experiences within racial/ethnic minorities. 40% of the participants identified as gay or lesbian, 27.5% bisexual, 25.5% queer, 2% heterosexual, and 5% transgender or other gender identity. The participants sampled in this study also identified as black/African American (33%), Asian/Asian American/Pacific Islander (27.5%), Latino/Hispanic (13%), multiracial/multiethnic (19%), American Indian/Native American (4.5%) and other (3%). The participants were asked to complete a series of questionnaires regarding LGBTQ-based discrimination, racism, mental health, and suicide ideation. Then, the participants were asked to complete a demographic; this was needed in order to collect demographic information. The researchers used self-report scales to evaluate racial/ethnic discrimination, LGBTQ-discrimination, and experiences of depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation among the participants (Sutter & Perrin, 2016).

The results of this study showed that although racism experiences have similar effects, LGBTQ-based discrimination has an additive and significant impact on LGBTQ people of color, therefore, the hypothesis of this study was supported. The outcome of this study implied that LGBTQ people of color might be at higher risk of mental health problems and suicidal ideation. This research was related to the current study because it showed the importance of recognizing the experiences of LGBTQ people of color regarding stigma and discrimination (Sutter & Perrin, 2016).

Schmitz and Woodell (2018) conducted research to determine how homeless, midwestern LGBTQ youth understood the role of religion and spirituality in their lives. The researchers aimed to study the intersectional risk and resilience framework to further investigate the intricate

ways that spirituality and religion operate in homeless LGBTQ youth and how their various marginalized social statuses shaped their experiences (Schmitz & Woodell, 2018).

In order to obtain data, the researchers recruited self-identified LGBTQ participants that were between the ages 19 and 26. Their sample also included 18% of the respondents that identified as transgender, 18% lesbian, 27% gay, 50% bisexual, and 5% heterosexual and transgender. Of the total, eleven of the participants were white (50%), five of them were African American (23%), one was Asian American (5%), four were bi-racial or multi-racial (14%), and one was Native American/American Indian (5%). The researchers then had the participants complete one detailed face-to-face interview that lasted 1 hour, and they were required to complete a short demographic questionnaire. The interviews were tape-recorded, and the participants were interviewed in a private room at a public library or at a local agency. The participants were asked the same open-ended questions, such as, "How do you feel your LGBTQ identity has shaped your relationships?" and "What challenges have you faced being LGBTQ?" (Schmitz & Woodell, 2018).

The results of their study revealed that religion and spirituality did in fact play multiple roles in young homeless LGBTQ individuals' lives. Some reported having a positive impact from religion by using it as a source of resilience. Some reported facing rejection, religious-based prejudice, and discrimination from religious establishments in their lives. This is related to the current study because it is not uncommon to see discrimination against LGBTQ individuals as a right of religious freedom. Sometimes, LGBTQ individuals and LGBTQ people of color deal with lingering religious trauma they encountered as children, even before they realized they were members of the LGBTQ community. The findings of this study can not only raise awareness on religious trauma, but it can help raise awareness on how religion and spirituality can shape LGBTQ youths' lives in various, diverse ways (Schmitz & Woodell, 2018).

Researchers Forge, Hartinger-Saunders, Wright & Ruel (2018) conducted a study on LGBTQ youth homelessness and their former involvement with the child welfare system. Their research aims to describe the experiences and characteristics of LGBTQ youth who were previously involved in the child welfare system and are currently experiencing homelessness. The participants that were used in this study included 693 recruited individuals between the ages of 14 and 25 who were homeless and runaway youth. First, they were asked to complete a demographic, which asked about their age, race, gender identity, sexual orientation, personal and family background, trauma exposure, educational status, financial and employment status, mental health status, health risk behaviors, and involvement with the child welfare, criminal justice systems, and contact with health and outreach organizations. Then, the participants were asked to indicate the reason they were homeless and the length of time they were homeless (Forge, Hartinger-Saunders, Wright, & Ruel, 2018).

The results of this study revealed that the majority of participants who reported being involved in the child welfare system were black or African American LGBTQ youth. The researchers also discovered that the most common and nearly primary reason for LGBTQ youth being homeless was because they were kicked out of their homes, and LGBTQ youth who aged

out of foster care were not taught basic life skills needed to achieve independent and successful way of living. In addition, the researchers found that LGBTQ youth experienced more child abuse, sexual violence, and victimization as children while living on the street than heterosexual youth. This study is related to the current study because the results display how black LGBTQ youth and LGBTQ youth are at a tremendous risk of homelessness and incarceration, and why it is important for them to get the care and support they need from housing-based services and interventions designed to be LGBTQ-affirming spaces (Forge, Hartinger-Saunders, Wright, & Ruel, 2018).

Researchers Dessel, Goodman, and Woodford (2017) conducted a study on LGBTQ discrimination on college campuses and the importance of understanding the intentions of bystanders to intervene. The purpose of their research was to further comprehend the nature of heterosexual college students and their tendency to intervene when they see cases of LGBTQ harassment either: involving no one they know, when they know only witnesses, when they know only the perpetrator, or when they know everyone. The researchers also further investigated the influence of pro-LGBTQ student inputs (i.e., their sociodemographics, perspectives on LGBTQ, self-esteem, and political views). Furthermore, the researchers hypothesized that heterosexual college students with higher self-esteem, more affirming LGBTQ perspectives, minor religious views, and students that are more politically liberal would show higher intentions to intervene with LGBTQ harassment (Dessel, Goodman, & Woodford, 2017).

In order to obtain data, the researchers recruited participants through a listing of sophomore and junior undergraduate students. A random sample of 8,000 graduate students was included in their research as well. These selected participants were contacted and invited to partake in the study through their university email addresses. However, only 3,762 participants agreed to participate. Then, the participants were asked to read three hypothetical scenarios, each which involved witnessing another student (the perpetrator) engage in heterosexist behaviors. Scenario 1: "In a small group of students, you overhear someone making a gay joke or negative comment about LGBTQ people." Scenario 2: "You see a student treating another student unfairly because they are/perceived to be LGBTQ." Scenario 3: "You witness a student verbally harassing another student because they are/perceived to be LGBTQ." Then, the participants were asked to rate from 1-7 how likely they were to intervene in that scenario against LGBTQ harassment. 1 equaled very unlikely, and 7 equaled very likely. The higher the scores, the higher the intervention (Dessel, Goodman, & Woodford, 2017).

The results of their study showed that specific student experiences and inputs correlated with their likelihood to intervene. As hypothesized, students with higher LGBTQ perspectives, higher self-esteem, and minor religious views were more likely to intervene with LGBTQ harassment. However, in their findings regarding political ideologies, the researchers found no significant effects, which contrasts with their hypothesis. This was related to the current study because widespread discrimination proceeds to shape LGBTQ individuals in both subtle and significant ways. Standing up to LGBTQ harassment could be a steppingstone to diminish LGBTQ discrimination (Dessel, Goodman, & Woodford, 2017).

Nama, MacPherson, Sampson, and McMillan (2017) conducted research on LGBTQ discrimination in the medical field to study medical students' attitudes and caring for LGBTQ patients. The researchers' study aimed to determine medical students' comfort levels and knowledge when working with co-workers and caring for LGBTQ patients to determine if medical students have regarded and witnessed LGBTQ biases from other medical students, nurses, physiotherapists, residents and/or staff physicians. The methods used in this study included a questionnaire-based survey that targeted 671 participants, all medical students. The survey estimated whether students have seen or witnessed any form of heterosexism or biases against individuals who identify as LGBTQ in the work field. The students were asked to score their own level of comfort towards LGBTQ individuals. The students were also asked to rate from 1-5 whether they were in favor of treating LGBTQ patients. 1 equaled strongly agree, and 5 equaled strongly disagree (Nama, MacPherson, Sampson, & McMillan, 2017).

The results of this study revealed that there were low explicit prejudices; most students had no issue in providing medical care to LGBTQ patients and were open to additional training for these patients. The students also reported witnessing or perceiving little to no heterosexism or biases towards LGBTQ patients. This was related to the current study because while this study revealed a significant amount of acceptance for these specified patients, there are still some incidences of heterosexism and, to an extent, discrimination against LGBTQ individuals, especially black LGBTQ individuals, in the medical field that continues to occur and needs to be addressed. (Nama, MacPherson, Sampson, & McMillan, 2017).

Chaney and Patrick (2011) conducted a study on the invisibility of black LGBTQ individuals in black churches. The researchers aimed to discover the disconnection that exists within the black LGBTQ community and the black church. The purpose of their study was to discover how black churches target the needs of LGBTQ individuals. It focused on the similarities and dissimilarities that exist within the provided support to LGBTQ members of black churches and gay-affirming black churches (Chaney & Patrick, 2011).

In order to obtain data, the researchers examined themes, discourses from the sermons, and interviews with the pastors. They specifically used the Potter's House church in Dallas, Texas. This research seemingly had a reputation of condemning the LGBTQ community. The themes in their research were identified through narratives. Identifying the themes involved three steps: separately and individually reading the sermon passages; interviewing individuals; and looking at missions of various Potter's House programs with the purpose of distinguishing the most prominent themes. Words and phrases were the units of investigation. Units that showed support of homosexual/LGBT individuals and/or the concerns of homosexual/LGBT individuals were marked with an "S," which meant support. Words and phrases that showed no support of homosexuality, and/or the concerns of homosexuals/LGBTQ individuals were marked with an "NS," which meant non-support. Finally, units that displayed uncertainty of homosexuality and/or the concerns of homosexuals/LGBTQ individuals were marked with an "A," which meant ambivalence (Chaney & Patrick, 2011).

The results of their study revealed that the Potter House, specifically the pastor, was non-supportive of homosexuality/LGBTQ people. However, the pastor stated in one of the interviews that although he is not supportive of gay marriage, he was heavily in favor of equality in the treatment of these individuals; the pastor did not believe that members of the LGBTQ community should face persecution. Nevertheless, during the interviews, the pastor seemed to demonstrate his own unwillingness to "talk about" the emotional issues that are important to LGBTQ individuals. This related to the current study because the subtle discrimination in black churches has significant impacts on the well-being of black LGBTQ individuals. Subtle discrimination may cause some religious LGBTQ individuals to have a crisis of faith. Instead of "being afraid to talk about" or "teach on" an issue that is primarily considered political, black churches may need to encourage these individuals to do so without placing any form of judgment. Doing this may gradually help black churches become a spiritual model of equality that provides holistic support to all individuals, regardless of their skin color, race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. (Chaney & Patrick, 2011).

The model study I used for my research project was Page, Cerezo, and Ross's (2021) study on intersectional stigma among black sexual minority women. The researchers hypothesized that black sexual minority women and gender-diverse individuals experience struggles with identity validation, as well as oppression, and internalized oppression more than white sexual minority women and white gender-diverse individuals. The method of their study involved 13 self-identified black and/or African American sexual minority women and gender-diverse individuals complete a demographic questionnaire. The age range of the participants was 23-48 years old. Eleven of the participants identified as women, one of them identified as gender-nonconforming, and another identified as genderfluid. Seven of the participants identified as lesbian, three identified as bisexual, two identified as queer, and one identified as gay. These individuals were asked about their age, racial and ethnic identity, gender identity, religious preference, education level, income level, parental status, U.S. citizenship, and relationship status (Page, Cerezo, & Ross, 2021).

Then, Page, Cerezo, and Ross (2021) had the participants engage in individual, extensive, semi-structured interviews. In the interviews, the participants were asked these four questions: (1) "How do you identify yourself to others in terms of your gender, race, and sexual identity?", (2) "What are your experiences of sexual identity within the black community?" (3) "How do you think members of the black community perceive lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer persons?" (4) "What are your experiences in gaining validation or acceptance for your sexual identity within the LGBTQ+ community?" The purpose of the interview was to elicit an open-ended discussion of the participants' lived experiences. The researchers then divided their data analysis into four major conceptual categories: "Negotiating one's space within the black community, rainbow is not enough, looking the part, and resistance." These categories were divided into four subcategories because these contributed to the need to reveal any form of experienced racism and heterosexism (Page, Cerezo, & Ross, 2021).

The study's hypothesis was supported because the participants stated they had experienced regular marginalization and exclusion in both LGBTQ+ spaces and black spaces. The participants also stated that they experienced racial messages and ongoing conflict with their sexual orientation. They shared that they have struggled to maintain a positive connection with their family and religion. The researchers' study concluded that sexual minority persons of color do seem to struggle to negotiate and/or solve conflict and gain acceptance of their membership in their racial community, ethnic community, sexual minority community, and gender diverse community (Page, Cerezo, & Ross, 2021).

I approached this study differently by revealing social media profiles of white sexual minority women and black sexual minority women to an introductory psychology class that was filled with mostly freshmen-level collegiate students. I believed these changes were exceedingly important because it was crucial to recognize indirect forms of racial and sexual discrimination through the lenses of a young, diverse group. First-year students could be more prone to unintentionally displaying racial and sexual discrimination than those who are upperclassmen.

#### *The Current Study*

The purpose of this study was to discover if black sexual minority women were treated more unjustly than white sexual minority women in society. The results of this study may be used as a way to spread more recognition and integration of the lived experiences of black sexual minority women. I believed this research topic deserved to be studied because I have noticed there was little psychological research on these experiences in black sexual minority women. In addition, studies on black sexual minority women have been overlooked and neglected. I hypothesized that participants would be more likely to display subtle discrimination when presented with a social media profile of a black sexual minority woman versus a social media profile of a white sexual minority woman. Thus, indicating that we may be harsher on black sexual minority women than white sexual minority women.

### **Method**

#### *Participants*

The target sample was a diverse group of 31 undergraduate students altogether, and the study took place in PSY 150: General Psychology course, a predominantly freshmen-filled class. There were 17 students in the first class, and there were 14 students in the second class. The participants ranged from the ages 18-21.68.8% of the participants identified as female, 25.0% of the students identified as male, and 3.1% identified as other. 70.9% of the participants were white/Caucasian, 12.5% were black/African American, and 3.1% were Asian/Asian descent. Many participants, 78.1% of the students, also identified as heterosexual/straight, 6.3% identified as bisexual/pansexual, and 3.1% identified as gay/lesbian.59.4 % of the participants were freshmen-level college students, 21.9% were sophomores, 12.5% were juniors and 3.1% were seniors.

#### *Materials*

The materials used for this experiment were a social media profile of a white sexual minority woman (see Appendix A) and a black sexual minority woman (see Appendix B). The



social media profiles were identical with the exception of the women's skin color in the photos. The profiles displayed a quick background of each character, and consisted of stories of their personal life, their relationship status, their education, and their occupation. A Facebook profile template was used to create the two social media profiles. Printed demographic studies were also used in understanding the participants' perceptions. The demographics asked about the students' age, gender identity, racial identity, sexual orientation, and their current college level (see Appendix C). Lastly, printed surveys were used in this experiment. These had rating scales of 1-5 paired with the following questions: "How likely you would befriend this woman?", "How likely you would trust this woman?" and "How likely you would engage in an academic project with this woman?" (see Appendix D).

### *Design*

The research design for this study had a posttest-only control group design. For my independent variable, the color of each sexual minority woman was manipulated. The operational definition of this was if there was any subtle discrimination based on skin color in both racial minorities and sexual minorities. For my dependent variable, the ratings of each sexual minority woman's social media profile were measured. The operational definition of this was the overall score on the ratings between the white sexual minority woman and the black sexual minority woman. I had randomly assigned my participants by splitting them into two groups, the first group had 17 participants and the second group had 14 participants.

### *Procedure*

Once both professors' permission was granted to proceed with this experiment, the first professor, who taught a Monday, Wednesday, and Friday PSY 150 course that started from 09:55 AM - 10:45 AM, and the second professor, who taught a Tuesday and Thursday PSY 150 class that started from 01:00 PM - 02:20 PM, were asked to hand out printed demographics for their students to fill out. Next, the students were asked to carefully examine the social media profile that was shown in the front of their class. The participants were then asked to rate from a scale of 1-5 of how likely they would befriend the woman, how likely they would trust the woman, and how likely they would engage in an academic project with the woman. This experiment took place at different times on different days for the same class. Different classes saw either the black sexual minority woman's social media profile or the white sexual minority woman's social media profile.

## **Results**

Before testing the study hypothesis, the data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The main study variables included the color of each sexual minority woman and befriending, trust, and engagement in academics. Befriending, trust, and engagement in academics were operationalized on a Likert scale from 1-5, 1 being not very likely and 5 being very likely. The variable of the color of each sexual minority woman was calculated by the counts and percentages for each group. For the befriending, trust, and engagement in academics variable, I calculated the mean, standard deviation, and range of the responses. The main study hypothesis was tested using inferential statistics. I hypothesized that participants would be more likely to

display subtle discrimination when presented with the black sexual minority woman's social media profile than the white sexual minority woman's social media profile. The inferential analysis I performed was an independent samples t-test. In the analysis, viewing the social media profiles was the independent variable with participants randomly assigned to two groups. The groups were the black sexual minority woman's profile (experimental group) or the white sexual minority woman's profile (control group). The dependent variable was befriending, trust, and engagement in academics.

#### *Descriptive Statistics*

For the variable of the color of each sexual minority woman, there were 14 participants in the experimental group and 17 participants in the control group. For the befriending variable, the mean number was 3.6 with a standard deviation of 1.05 and a range of 1-5. The trust variable had a mean number of 3.35 with a standard deviation of 1.35 and a range of 1-5. For the engagement in academics variable, the mean number was 3.9 with a standard deviation of 0.90 and a range of 2-5.

#### *Inferential Statistics*

An independent samples t-test was computed to assess the effect of the social media profile of sexual minority women on befriending. There was a significant effect of the social media profiles of sexual minority women on befriending,  $t(29) = -2.174, p = .038$ , with the white sexual minority group and black sexual minority group having significantly different mean values. The mean of befriending for the white sexual minority woman's profile was 3.2941 ( $SD=1.04670$ ), while the mean of the black sexual minority woman's profile was 4.0714 ( $SD=.91687$ ) (see Figure 1).

A second independent samples t-test was computed to assess the effect of the social media profile of sexual minority women on trust. There was a not significant effect of the social media profiles of sexual minority women on trust,  $t(29) = -1.077, p = .290$ , with the white sexual minority group and black sexual minority group having similar mean values. The mean of trust for the white sexual minority woman's profile was 3.1176 ( $SD=1.53632$ ), while the mean of the black sexual minority woman's profile was 3.6429 ( $SD= 1.08182$ ) (see Figure 2).

A third independent samples t-test was computed to assess the effect of the social media profile of sexual minority women on engagement in academics. There was not a significant effect of the social media profiles of sexual minority women on engagement in academics,  $t(29) = .253, p = .802$ , with the white sexual minority group and black sexual minority group having similar mean values. The mean of engagement in academics for the white sexual minority woman's profile was 3.9412 ( $SD=.89935$ ), while the mean of the black sexual minority woman's profile was 3.8571 ( $SD= .94926$ ) (see Figure 3).

#### **Discussion**

The results of this study showed that the participants were more likely to befriend black sexual minority women, but they were less likely to trust and engage in an academic project with black sexual minority women. I believe there was a difference in befriending, trust, and engagement in academics because, while young individuals might be more inclined to befriend

black sexual minority women, they might feel uncomfortable and uncertain when interacting with black sexual minority women as peers in the academic field; uncertainty and discomfort may also insinuate a lack of trust towards black sexual minority women. Because of this, black sexual minority women might be at risk of struggling harder to access and advance in professional realms.

I hypothesized that participants would be more likely to display subtle discrimination when presented with a black sexual minority woman's social media profile than a white sexual minority woman's social media profile. My hypothesis was not supported through befriending, but it was supported through trust and engagement in academics. The first independent samples t-tests revealed that there were significant differences in befriending; in contrast to the second and third independent t-tests, they revealed that there were not significant differences in trust and engagement in academics. While previous research indicated the intersectional experiences, psychological health, and various levels of oppression within sexual minorities and black sexual minorities, the results were only replicated with trust and engagement in academics. I believe more studies based on trust and engagement in academics should be conducted to see if there are any significant differences.

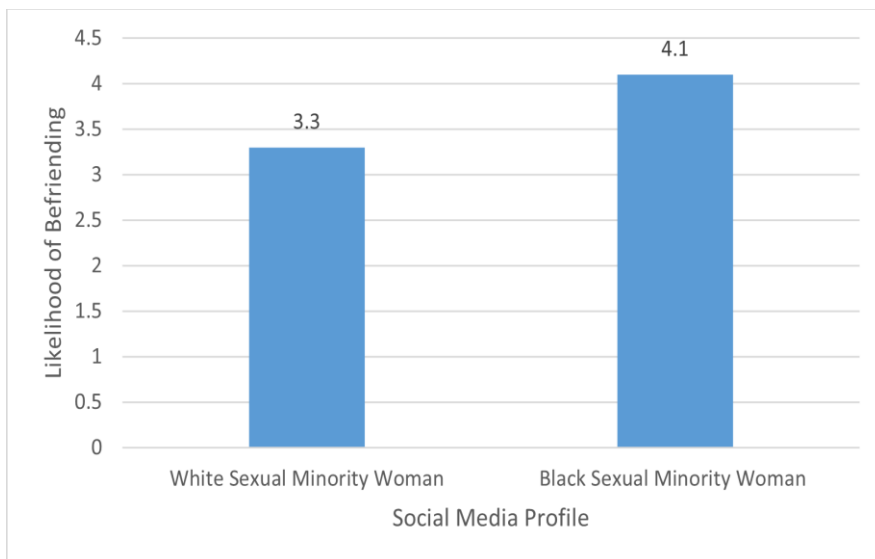
It should be noted that this current study did not exclude any limitations. One of the limitations that were involved in the current study was the setting. The setting only took place in two classrooms at Thiel College. Because of this, the results could have affected the outcome of this study in various ways. The study could be conducted in various locations, such as high schools, middle schools, and professional work fields to see if there are any significant differences in displaying subtle discrimination among multiple age groups apart from Thiel College. Another limitation that was involved in the current study was it was conducted in the same psychology course but on different days and times for the same course. The study could be conducted in courses from various departments (e.g., English courses, natural science courses, religion courses, philosophy courses, etc.), as students in other departments might have a different perspective on black sexual minority women than the students in the psychology department. Because of this, the results could have affected the outcome of this study in numerous ways.

There are a few potential future studies that I have in mind. One of the future studies that I have in mind would be to replace the younger participants with older participants; the older participants would be within the ages 30 or older. I believe this could be a possible avenue because I believe older participants would be more likely to display subtle discrimination due to holding more traditional perspectives, especially if they have a religious background. Another future study that I have in mind would be to replace the black sexual minority women with black sexual minority men. To reiterate, I have noticed there has been minimal psychological research done on black sexual minority women, and I believe the same would apply to black sexual minority men. I believe research in both minority groups has been overlooked and neglected in the psychology realm. I could potentially replicate this study and replace photos of black sexual minority women with black sexual minority men and replace the social media profile

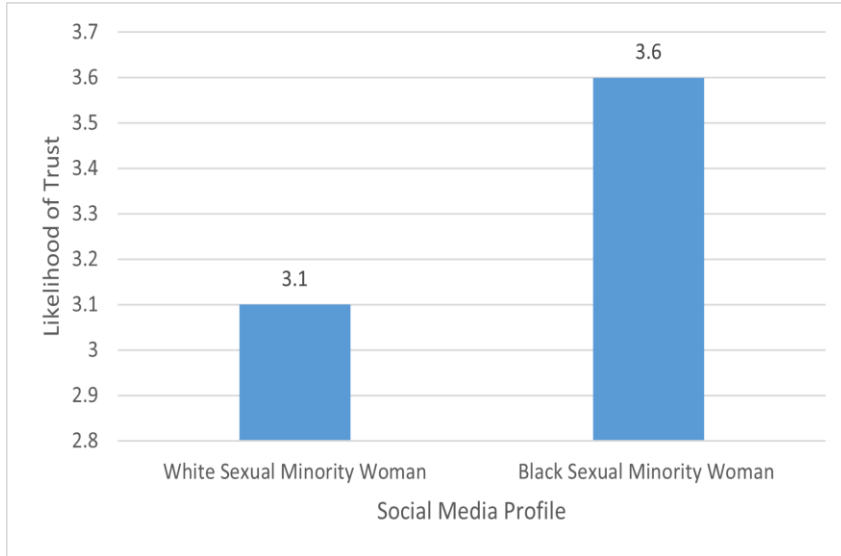
backgrounds of the characters, as well. It would be intriguing to see if the outcome of the study on black sexual minority men would be relatively similar or different from the current study that was conducted.

In conclusion, the current study may be used as a way to enlighten younger and older individuals on the lived experiences of black sexual minority women. Recognizing and spreading awareness of the discrimination in ethnic spaces and LGBTQ spaces may allow individuals to have a deeper understanding of the intersectional experiences within black sexual minorities. If individuals fail to recognize the complexities in intersectionality, they would be neglecting the reality of black sexual minorities and other marginalized groups. This could cause immense harm to black sexual minorities and other marginalized groups. Therefore, when individuals acknowledge the history and roots of racism and homophobia in black sexual minorities, they may have a more prominent understanding of why it is crucial to examine and advocate the issues faced by LGBTQ people of color from an intersectional perspective.

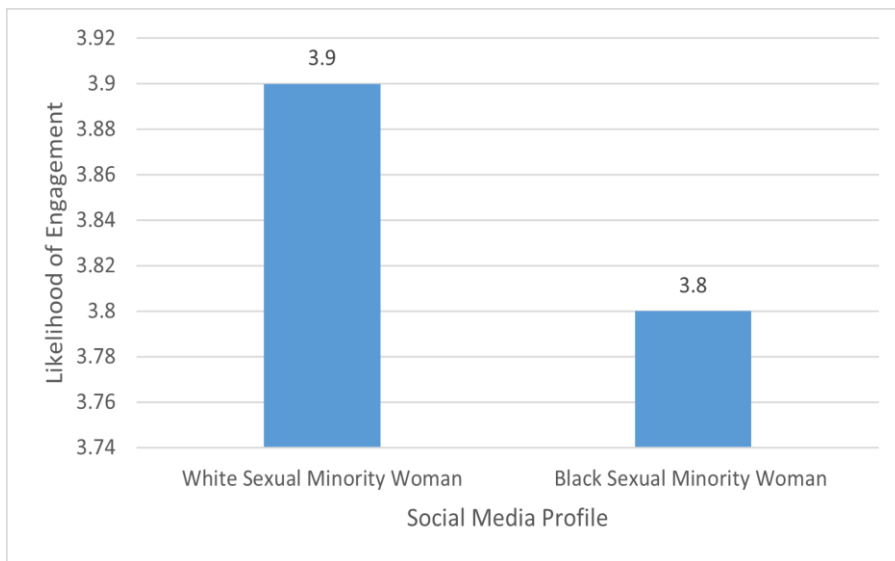
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*Figure 1.* Significantly, the black sexual minority woman's profile received higher ratings on the likelihood of befriending than the white sexual minority woman's profile.



*Figure 2.* Though not statistically significant, the black sexual minority woman's profile received higher ratings on the likelihood of trust than the white sexual minority woman's profile.




*Figure 3.* Though not statistically significant, the white sexual minority woman's profile received higher ratings on the likelihood of engagement in academics than the black sexual minority woman's profile.

## Appendix A

### White Sexual Minority Woman's Social Media Profile

facebook Wall Photos Flair Boxes Olivia Miller Logout



View photos of Olivia Miller (5)

Send Olivia Miller a message


Poke message

**Information**


Birth day:  
February 3, 1997  
Political:  
Other  
Hometown:  
Miami, FL

**Photos**

2 Albums



Beach Visits  
Updated last Tuesday



Miami Pride 2019  
Updated two years ago

**Basic Information**

Sex: Female  
Birthday: February 3, 1997  
Hometown: Miami, FL  
Relationship Status: Engaged to [Scarlett Williams](#)  
Political Views: Other  
Education: Thiel College

**Personal Information**

About Me:

I am a curious, creative, and compassionate individual! I'm happily engaged, I'm currently a full-time bakery clerk, and I'm a proud mother of 3 cats and a dog. 🐾🐾🐾🐾🐾❤️

My interests include photography, running, going to the beach, rock climbing, yoga, karaoke nights, game nights, psychology, and independent research into learning and curiosity.

I'm not great at getting to know people through solely text-based conversations, so I strongly prefer in-person and socially distant interaction! A virtual meeting will suffice if need be. 😊

I always strive to be happy, healthy, and helpful.

My favorite quote: "Never let anyone treat you like a yellow starburst. You are a pink starburst!"


**Contact Information**

Phone Number: (555) 456-8159

## Appendix B

### Black Sexual Minority Woman's Social Media Profile

facebook Wall Photos Flair Boxes Olivia Miller Logout



Wall Info Photos Boxes

**Basic Information**

Sex:	Female
Birth day:	February 3, 1997
Hometown:	Miami, FL
Relationship Status:	Engaged to <a href="#">Scarlett Williams</a>
Political Views:	Other
Education:	Thiel College

**Personal Information**

About Me:

I am a curious, creative, and compassionate individual! I'm happily engaged, I'm currently a full-time bakery clerk, and I'm a proud mother of 3 cats and a dog. 🐾🐾🐾🐾🐾❤️

My interests include photography, running, going to the beach, rock climbing, yoga, karaoke nights, game nights, psychology, and independent research into learning and curiosity.

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My favorite quote: "Never let anyone treat you like a yellow starburst. You are a pink starburst!"

**Contact Information**

Phone Number: (555) 456-8159

View photos of Olivia Miller (5)

Send Olivia Miller a message


Poke message


**Information**

Birth day: February 3, 1997  
Political: Other  
Hometown: Miami, FL

**Photos**

2 Albums

 Beach Visits  
Updated last Tuesday

 Miami Pride 2019  
Updated two years ago

## Appendix C

### Demographic

# Background Information- You

**Instructions:** Please answer the following questions below as honestly as you are able and feel comfortable doing.

1. What is your current age?
2. Which of these best describes your current gender identity? Please circle all that apply.
  - a) Male
  - b) Female
  - c) Trans Male/Trans Man
  - d) Trans Female/Trans Woman
  - e) Genderqueer/Gender Non-Conforming
  - f) Other
  - g) Prefer not to answer
3. Which of these best describes your sexual orientation?
  - a) Heterosexual or straight
  - b) Gay or lesbian
  - c) Bisexual
  - d) Pansexual
  - e) Questioning
  - f) Other
  - g) Prefer not to answer
4. What is your race/ethnicity? Please check the option that best describes you.
  - a) American Indian or Alaska Native
  - b) Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - c) Asian or Asian American
  - d) Black or African American
  - e) Hispanic or Latino
  - f) Non-Hispanic White or Caucasian
  - g) Multiple
  - h) Other
5. What is your current level in college?
  - a) Freshmen
  - b) Sophomore
  - c) Junior
  - d) Senior



Appendix D

Overall Ratings on Social Media Profiles

**Overall Rating**

**Please choose a number that best represents how likely you would befriend Olivia Miller.**

1  2  3  4  5

Not Very Likely

Most Likely

**Please choose a number that best represents how likely you would trust Olivia Miller.**

1  2  3  4  5

Not Very Likely

Most Likely

**Please choose a number that best represents how likely you would engage in an academic project with Olivia Miller.**

1  2  3  4  5

Not Very Likely

Most Likely

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