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Black Women in PWI: Cultural Taxation, Microaggressions, & Stress

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Black Women in PWI:
Cultural Taxation, Microaggressions, & Stress

Senior Project submitted to
The Division of Science, Mathematics, and Computing of Bard College

by
Roxanna Delgado

Bard College
May 3, 2023
Foreword

Perhaps I chose this topic because of its personal relativity, I am a black woman after all. But I am not that selfish. Growing up I observed all the black people around me. I saw our variety, our colors, our words, our movements, our tears, our laughter, and our love. Allow me to impart some thoughts on racial discrimination in America:

A few statements that I really detest hearing are “Why are you always bringing race into everything,” or “Why are you making it a racial issue?” or better yet “Race is not political.” To these statements I say that you are wrong. Completely and irrevocably false. If race is not political then policies dictating appropriate hairstyles would not actively target black children in spaces where they are supposed to learn. If race is not political then music censorship on radio would not deliberately avoid playing music created by black artists. If race is not political then the 13th amendment would not legalize slavery even as punishment for a crime and black citizens would not be targeted as criminals right after the Civil War. If race is not political then explain to me with logical rationale why the Tulsa massacre happened? Why was Martin Luther King Jr. assassinated? Why does the 13th amendment allow involuntary servitude in the case of punishment of a crime while mass incarceration specifically targets Black Americans? Why is it so hard to convince a police officer not to shoot you but to save you? Everyday these thoughts harass my mind, clearly taunting my helpless state. I do not take it lightly when my white peers dictate where the racial issues are. The truth is that they are everywhere, and they are embedded within the societal script that we continue to use. Racial discrimination through the use of societal behavior, thoughts, and language is a component that has been able to exist undetected. Where do we even begin to trace the damage that has been done?
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BLACK WOMEN PWI: CULTURAL TAXATIONS, MICROAGGRESSIONS, STRESS
Abstract

My senior project focuses on Black women college students, a population often overlooked in research and looked down upon in society. When thinking about common challenges faced in this country’s education system, I thought about cultural taxation and microaggressions. Cultural taxation has been coined as a burden placed upon the shoulders of ethnic faculty in servicing the educational institution by Amado Padillo in 1994, however, there is also a similar burden placed upon ethnic students to conform to the stereotype they are outlined to be by others. This term not only applies to faculty, but to ethnic minority students who also have to perform. Microaggressions were founded by psychiatrist Chester M. Pierce in the early 1970s where today the modernized term for this would be an action or comment, either direct or indirect, towards a person of a marginalized group that gives power to the prejudiced attitudes of the said marginalized group. Speaking with many ethnic minorities, I have heard many stories of these types of attacks, whether the victim even recognizes it at the moment or has only interpreted that experience differently years later. The gravity and frequency of these stressors led me to think about their mental health impacts and had me questioning just how stressed my fellow Black female classmates are. I hypothesize that perceived stress will positively correlate with both microaggressions and cultural taxation. Additionally, I also hypothesize that Black women college students will report high scores across all three variables compared to Black men. Data was collected using a brief survey created on Qualtrics, then the results were computed using Jamovi and hand calculations. The results show that for this particular sample perceived stress did not positively correlate with either cultural taxation or microaggressions. Further research is needed to continue exploring these unfortunate experiences.
Black Women in PWIs: Cultural Taxation, Microaggressions, & Stress

Being a Black woman in America is tough. It is no different here on the campus of Bard College. Having the reputation of maintaining its PWI status, Bard College continues to emphasize that status through its admitted students and hired faculty. As the label PWI suggests, Bard College is a Predominantly White Institution, where a majority of its enrolled students are White. Racism leaves no stone unturned in America, it runs rampant through this campus whether we realize it or not. While it would be easier to have an entire discussion or podcast, validating phenomena a plethora of us recognize within scientific framework is essential work in legitimizing pains that have been unnoticed for hundreds of years.

Microaggressions

While it is indeed true that racism is a constructed figment of imagination, it negatively affects minority racial groups everyday. This is done in the form of discrimination within our societal script. The APA provides a new term for racial discrimination, modern racism, to describe prejudice against minority racial groups that is expressed indirectly or covertly. In the 1970s, black psychiatrist Chester M. Pierce, defined microaggressions as “black-white racial interactions characterized by white put-downs, done in an automatic, preconscious, or unconscious fashion. These mini-disasters accumulate. It is the sum total of multiple micro-aggressions by whites to blacks that has pervasive effect to the stability and peace of this world.” (Pierce, 1974). Today it is defined as “a comment or action that subtly and often unconsciously or unintentionally expresses a prejudiced attitude toward a member of a marginalized group” according to Merriam Webster Dictionary.

While attending a friend’s birthday celebration, a white friend of their’s had told me that I should “beat up the old white dude who said the n-word in that one meme video.” In that
moment, many things occurred to me almost instantaneously. I knew of the video to which he was referring to, where an elderly white man is rapping and proceeds to call Jesus Christ the n-word. But, as a black woman, I thought, how could he insinuate that I should act violently towards someone? Lastly, I believed that the minute he spoke I unknowingly became the target of a microaggression. Explicit racism is different, an example would be white women utilizing the police to subdue racial group members through violence. This is different from a microaggression because the intentions are not the same. The white man at the party was definitely unaware of the implication of his words and when “Karens” call the police they fully do intend to cause harm. Nonetheless, there continues to be heavy debate on the existence and measure of microaggressions.

In 2017, fellow researcher Scott Lilienfeld argued about five faulty premises of microaggressions. It must be stated that Lilienfeld is a white man who does not experience racial oppression. He first stated that “Microaggressions are operationalized with sufficient clarity and consensus to afford rigorous scientific investigation.” The second statement he made was “Microaggressions are interpreted negatively by most or all minority group members.” His next faulty premise described “Microaggressions reflect implicitly prejudicial and implicitly aggressive motives.” The following premise stated “Microaggressions can be validly assessed using only respondents’ subjective reports.” Lastly, for his fifth statement, he said “Microaggressions exert an adverse impact on recipients’ mental health,” (Lilienfeld, 2017). Essentially, he believes that the five premises he presented are the issue with research regarding microaggressions, which in turn invalidates a majority of the research that has been done. His critiques were accepted and emphasized by other scholars creating a very scary world of research or ethnic minorities. Monnica T. Williams, a psychology professor at the University of Ottawa,
contributes five premises for the validation of microaggressions which actively rebuttals Lilienfeld’s original statements. Her statements in response to Lilienfeld are as follows: “Microaggressions are well defined,” “Adequate agreement exists regarding what constitutes a microagression,” “Microaggressions are correlated with valid measures of racism,” “Microaggressions can be validly assessed using respondents’ subjective report,” and finally “Microaggressions are linked to negative mental-health outcomes,” (Williams, 2019). As a Black woman in research, Williams seeks to disprove Lilienfeld’s statements not only with common sense but with logical reasoning as well. I am also a Black woman in research. Before I am a researcher, student, professor, etc., I am a Black woman. Lilienfeld’s arguments disrupt the experiences many black people, such as myself, face. He actively invalidates the burdens that are associated with having an ethnic-minority identity. It is quite obvious as to why Lilienfeld, almost incredulously, does not see the lack of awareness in his offensive statements. I claim that microaggressions are detectable, legitimate, and have serious consequences for those who have to deal with them.

That being said, the impact of microaggressions is anything but micro. In the grander scheme of things, the repetition of the information implied by microaggressions contributes to our societal script. If the statements and actions often being done within or society continue then the negative information of the outgroup continues to be perpetuated, therefore making it a never-ending cycle. Systemic racism is the cycle that racial microaggressions takes part in sustaining. Microaggressions have been found to be associated with a multitude of negative mental health outcomes. The list includes stress, depression, anxiety, symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder, substance use, reduced self efficacy, suicide, etc. When experiencing a microaggression, the subject may have a stress response. The states often following
microaggressions include confusion, anger, anxiety, helplessness, hopelessness, frustration, paranoia, and fear. Naturally, one must cope when faced with negative feelings which may lead to “dysfunctional coping strategies, such as denial, withdrawal, and substance abuse,” (Williams, 2019). Due to the commonality of microaggressions, the constant triggering of the stress response induces a state of chronic stress which may lead to an impaired immune response and hypertension. Black people are subjected to the adverse effects of microaggressions, beginning in adolescence leaning well into adulthood. It becomes an inescapable cycle and unfortunately associated with the black experience. The commonality of microaggressions and the inability to stop its course of destruction has led to its normalization.

Something that has become quite popular is the idea of becoming an ‘anti-racist.’ However, just like all popular concepts, education on racism continues to receive criticism. Many of the microaggression trainings that have been enacted in order to prevent racism, whether in the workplace or in school buildings, have done more harm than lessening racial tensions like they are intended to do. Due to instructors being unfit to teach on the subject of microaggressions, collective agreement about the harm of these trainings has been created, thus prompting the notion that education about racism does more damage than repair. Nonetheless, Williams urges that “we do not simply decide to stop educating people about important issues just because some people do it poorly,” (Williams, 2019). Yet Lilienfeld’s critiques only fueled more dissentary commentary where another researcher was able to state “microagression training is–by definition–instruction in how to detect ever smaller specks in your neighbor’s eye,” (Haidt, 2017). Still, it is no surprise that a majority of those against microaggression training have never been the victims of such violence. The reason for these trainings is to spread awareness and understanding about the invisible bullet that is the microaggression. In order to disrupt our
destructive societal script, which normalizes racism against ethnic minorities, consciousness about ‘unintentional’ racial discrimination should be a priority so that the suffering ceases to continue. Microaggressions reinforce discriminatory stereotypes because they maintain societal heuristics about the population, if perceptions of certain groups of people continue to be negative then the heuristics about said population groups will also continue to be inaccurate and harmful. In other words, heuristics create detrimental social habits and behaviors which in turn facilitates adverse outcomes for ethnic minorities. For example, today watermelon is highly associated with black Americans and almost always has a negative connotation. At times, it is implicitly associated with black people, though this association has never been thoroughly questioned. Why does watermelon act as a shortcut word that inherently implies that all black people like watermelon? Where did this stereotype come from and why is it so common? The point is, the watermelon stereotype is famous and is still weaponized today, despite individual preferences about fruit. The angry black woman is another example of a stereotype, where it becomes general knowledge that all black women are irrationally demanding and violent. The negative generalizations of black people are a part of the racial discrimination that continues to persist.

**Cultural Taxation**

First coined by renowned educator Amado M. Padilla in 1994, cultural taxation was defined as the “obligation to show good citizenship toward the institution by serving its needs for ethnic representation on committees, or to demonstrate knowledge and commitment to a cultural group,” (Padilla, 1994). Originally limited to only faculty of color, the expectancy by institutions to present as monoliths to further institutional image is a burden that many ethnic minorities deal with. And while Padilla advocates for more research to be conducted concerning the cultural taxation of ethnic students, little research has been generated to study this unfortunate
phenomena. As a black woman studying at a PWI, I grew my awareness of the burdens my fellow students of color carry on their shoulders everyday. Especially in accordance with academia, a place where ethnic minorities cannot afford to ‘fail.’ We tell ourselves that in order to survive the educational system and achieve success we must do as much as we can to secure our positions in the future. For Black Americans, success is considered scarce but it is the first dream we are conditioned to strive for because it means freedom.

It is considered normal for the classroom to be filled with an unbearable tension because the subject being taught by a white professor is slavery, and a majority of the seats are taken up by white people. I, too, have experienced the inescapable uneasy situations of being the only Black student in the room where uncomfortable gazes fall upon me to tackle the subject of Jim Crow Laws. At Bard College, the Language and Thinking Program is geared to facilitate social harmony among the incoming freshmen, however it only made me question the consequences of my skin color. In my L&T class, I was the only black student, everyone else was white, with the exception of one student who was of non-black caribbean descent. Some of the texts that year focused on racism, where we were suddenly transported back to a time where segregation was legal and a functional weapon. Of course, texts written during Jim Crow and the Civil Rights Movement were going to incorporate the usage of the word ‘negro’ As far as I was concerned, it was common knowledge that the term was severely outdated and offensive, as it was used in derogatory contexts. However, it came as a shock to me when the white professor stated that they were going to refer to ‘negro’ as the the ‘NE-word,’ something that the L&T professors agreed to do together at the time. The white student sitting next to me had a confused look on his face and in the same breath asked “Why can’t we use the word negro anymore?” The classroom had fallen silent, and as I looked around the room the students’ gazes would meet mine and then quickly
look away. In that instant I became the informer, the one who was going to impart ‘unknown’
knowledge because everyone else had refused to do so and the professor kept stumbling over her
words. Why out of everyone in that classroom was I the one delegated to speak up? In what
situation would it ever be appropriate to use a derogatory term with the only one who it actively
affects sitting right next to you? That event continues to frustrate me, as I was taxed for my black
identity in order to service the institutions unassuming white students.

I am not your black monolith. I simply cannot speak for the entirety of the black diaspora
and neither can any other black person. Just like we come in different shades we also exist with
different perceptions and opinions. In a series of interviews conducted at a PWI in the south,
researchers found five main themes that participants attributed with their general experience
while attending the university. The five themes are as follows; “‘It Happens Every Day’” “‘You
Have to Initiate the Conversation’” “‘They Seem the Same; I’m The One Who’s Different’” “‘I
have to Prove I’m Worthy To Be Here’” “‘Sometimes I’m Not Even Here/Sometimes I Have to
Represent All Black Students,’” (Davis, 2004). While there may be a great deal of overlap
between microaggressions and cultural taxation, the stories that the participants shared reveal the
tax that they had to pay because of their racial identity. The themes that exemplify cultural
taxation the most would be the second, third, fourth, and fifth themes, whereas the first theme
can be attributed with microaggressions. Some participants commonly stated that there were
times in which they understood how they were different from their white peers, but also different
from other black students on campus. This idea of the black monolith is damaging, as it assumes
similarity among all black people. Assumptions of Similarity is a theme underneath
microaggressions, implying that cultural taxation and microaggressions exist both separately and
all at once. That is to say cultural taxation and microaggressions fall underneath the same umbrella of racial discrimination.

In 2021, fellow colleague Sherry Chowdhury conducted her senior project on the cultural taxation and stress of marginalized college students attending a PWI. In her study, Chowdhury collected data from 147 participants using a survey containing two portions. Participants first completed the Perceived Stress Scale section, a ten item scale that measures the stress of individuals. The next section was the Cultural Taxation/Identity Scale composed of seven questions that ask the participants to mark how frequent they have experienced the situations expressed in the questions. Chowdhury found a significant positive correlation between PSS scores and Cultural Taxation scores, indicating a relationship between stress and cultural taxation.

**Stress at a PWI**

There is insufficient modern research that highlights the mental health impacts of race-related stress and attending a PWI for black students. A study focusing on racial identity attitudes clusters conducted by Valene A. Whitaker and Helen Neville found that “...individuals who are comfortable with their Black identity and aware of racial issues report lower levels of psychological distress than do people who are relatively unclear about their racial identity,” (Whitaker & Neville, 2010) which eludes to the notion that to exist as a black person is a struggle. Racial discrimination may alter the way in which Black people think about themselves, and it comes in the form of social media and the societal script. When the news reports another black death at the hands of police or when you are constantly surrounded by individuals who say degrading things about Black people, it starts to change the way you think about your identity.
What does it mean to be black? That question, in essence, is one that the black community continues to grapple with.

Way back in 1993, researchers Anthony R. D’Augelli and Scott L. Hershberger published a study which called attention to the social networks developed by Black college students attending a PWI. They found that the Black college students sampled were reportedly “more troubled by the events they experienced, and they reported lower well-being,” (D’Augelli & Hershberger, 1993). Additionally, the “overall judgment of the university was significantly more negative,” for Black participants when compared to the White participants. The study composed of both Black men and Black women, gender aspects of any kind were not mentioned throughout the interviews. However, it can be argued that “Black women’s position at the intersection of racial and gender oppression creates a unique lived experience different from that of Black men,” (West et al., 2010). Since Black women carry the labels ‘black’ and ‘woman’ it opens up a new lived experience while still being oppressed.

**Hypotheses**

In the beginning, I told myself that my senior project would revolve around the observations I had made around campus. Countless of times have I heard personal anecdotes from fellow Black students where they are in some sort of stress related to either their culture, identity, race, or ethnicity. These personal stories include my own, where it seems to be a pattern for many Black students on campus. More often than not, it was black women who shared disheartening stories which ranged from mentioning unpleasant discriminatory faculty to bigoted White students who would claim to be not prejudiced if asked otherwise. Thus, in this study I aim to look at the relationship between stress, cultural taxation, and microaggressions of Black women college students. I generated three main hypotheses. The first hypothesis states that it is
expected that perceived stress will positively correlate with level of microaggressions among participants. The second hypothesis states that is is expected that perceived stress will positively correlate with the frequency of cultural taxation experienced among participants. Lastly, it is expected that Black women college students will report higher levels of stress, microaggressions, and cultural taxation when compared to Black men.

Method

Participants

Originally, the the recruitment goal was 40 participants. Unfortunately, the survey only garnered 14 respondents, 3 of which were incomplete. Recruitment was done through emailing majority of the BIPOC clubs, it was also emphasized that the study intended to sample from the Black student population on campus. In total, the survey received 11 responses. Requirements for participation indicated that to take part in the study participants had to self-identify as Black and also be a student living on campus. Black students of any gender, sexuality, or sexual orientation were accounted for in the survey. All participants were between the ages of 18-21 years. Of the 11 participants, 8 identified themselves as cisgender, 2 identified as transgender, and one individual identified as non-binary. Additionally, 3 participants identified as heterosexual, 4 identified as bisexual or pansexual, two identified as queer, and one participant identified as gay.

Instruments

In this study, the survey composed of three separate sections. Each section represents the measures of the variables that this study is interested in. The first component is the PSS
(Perceived Stress Scale), which briefly consists of ten items measuring the perception of stress of participants during the last month. It was first developed in 1983 by Sheldon Cohen and others, it continues to be used today. The questions are easy to interpret as they are incredibly broad and are fairly simple yet look at the possible aspects of a person’s life. The survey is adjusted to capture sudden changes that could potentially happen to an individual in the span of one month.

The second component is the REMS (Racial Ethnic Microaggressions Scale), where participants are asked to align themselves with the statements of each type of microaggression. Included in this section there are twenty-four questions, every four questions corresponding to a particular microaggression theme. Assumptions of Inferiority is the first theme, followed by Second-Class Citizen/Criminality, Microinvalidations, Exoticization/Assumptions of Similarity, Environmental, and Workplace/School (Nadal, 2011). All categories used in the REMS are adopted from Derald Wing Sue and other’s 2007 article depicting the many racial microaggressions that can happen in everyday life. Sue and others define 3 main forms of racial microaggressions; Microassault, Microinsult, and Microinvalidation. Microassaults refer to verbal or nonverbal derogatory attacks meant to bring harm to the victim, microinsults are “subtle snubs” that communicate hidden derogatory messages about a person’s racial identity, and microinvalidations are “characterized by communications that exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of a person of color,” (Sue et al., 2007).

The third section is the Cultural Taxation/Identity Scale, adapted from Sherry Chowdhury’s senior project. It consists of seven questions asking participants to share the frequency of possible cultural taxation incidents. The scale allows participants to put never, sometimes, about half the time, most of the time, or always for five aspects of culture and identity. Race/Ethnicity, Religion, Gender, Sexuality, and Socioeconomic status were the
assigned categories. Then, two questions regarding whether the participant has been uncompensated for any institutional work is asked followed by gender and sexuality identity questions.

**Procedure**

The survey was administered online through a link of leading to the Qualtrics page. Participants were first met with the consent form and required affirmation for being eighteen years of age or older, self-identifying as a black student, and living on campus. Once the consent form was acknowledged, participants were instructed to fill out the first section of the survey, the perceived stress scale. They were asked ten concise questions regarding their stress levels in the last month. The next section is the Racial Ethnic Microaggression Scale (REMS), where participants were asked to rate how much they agree with twenty-four short statements in which they believe they have experienced the situations described in the statements. The last sections entails the Cultural Taxation/Identity Scale, where participants were asked to rate how often five common groups of their identity have allowed for themselves to be taxed. The survey remained open for twenty-two days, roughly two weeks and a half, before officially closing on April 24, 2023. The data collected from the survey was then exported as a csv file to be opened and processed in jamovi. From there, partial correlational tests were conducted for the relationship between cultural taxation and stress and between microaggressions and stress. Linear regressions for both relationships were also calculated. A descriptives chart was additionally constructed along with two scatterplots with linear regression lines. The microaggressions factor was further broken up into six groups, each group representing a specific theme of microaggressions. Six supplementary scatterplots were produced, showing where each participant scored for the six themes separately, to further show the data that was found.
Results

Perceived Stress & Cultural Taxation

For the association between Perceived Stress and Cultural Taxation I hypothesized that it is expected for a strong positive correlation to be present. The results gathered from the tests on Jamovi revealed that Pearson’s $r(9) = -0.39$, 95% CI [-2.00, 0.92], $p = 1.000$. The alternative hypothesis assumed there was a positive association, thus the null hypothesis was accepted while the alternative was rejected.

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*Note.* $H_a$ is positive correlation

*Table 1.* Partial correlational analysis between Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) score means and Cultural Taxation/Identity Scale score means. The PSS scores and Cultural Taxations/Identity Scale scores did not correlate.
Figure 1. Scatterplot with regression line for Cultural Taxation/Identity Scale score means and Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) score means.
Table 2. Linear regression for Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) scores and Cultural Taxation/Identity Scale scores. There is no significant association between PSS scores and Cultural Taxation/Identity Scale scores.

Perceived Stress & Microaggressions

For the association between Perceived Stress and Microaggressions I hypothesized that it would also have a strong positive correlation. The partial correlation test on Jamovi revealed that Pearson’s $r(9) = 0.08$, 95% CI [-1.29, 1.44], $p = 0.422$. The alternative hypothesis assumed that there was a positive correlation, the null hypothesis was then rejected.
Table 3. Partial correlational analysis between Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) score means and Racial Ethnic Microaggression Scale (REMS) score means. PSS score means and REMS score means did not correlate.

Figure 2. Scatterplot with regression line for Racial Ethnic Microaggressions Scale (REMS) score means and Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) score means.
Table 4. Linear regression for Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) scores and Racial Ethnic Microaggressions Scale (REMS) scores. There is no significant association between PSS scores and REMS scores.

**Descriptives & By Hand Calculations**

In the descriptives chart, the mean for each measure was calculated. For the PSS, questions four, five, seven, and eight were reverse scored by hand, as it was something that Jamovi calculated incorrectly. From there, the means for each variable was calculated by hand in a notebook designated for all of my senior project content. The overall mean for the PSS, among all eleven participants, is found to be 3.32 (M = 3.32), with a standard deviation of 0.39 (SD = 0.39). For REMS, the total mean is 2.23 (M = 2.23) and a standard deviation of 0.40 (SD = 0.40). Lastly, the mean for Cultural Taxation/Identity Scale scores is 2.04 (M = 2.04) with a standard deviation of 0.63 (SD = 0.63). The variance for all three variables is small, the same observation can also be said for the standard deviation for each (Table 5).
Table 5. Descriptive statistics for Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) scores, Cultural Taxation/Identity Scale scores, and Racial Ethnic Microaggressions Scale (REMS) scores.

### Individual Microaggression Levels

Interestingly, scores for the six themes of microaggressions revealed where each participant stood on the matter. Looking at the individual scores of the participants can aid in conceptualizing just how often some perceive events of microaggressions taking place. While some participants scored below the averages, others scored above the averages. In some cases, participants would score below average for one theme but then score above average for another theme of microaggressions. Although there are participants who score below average, there is concern for the participants who scored above average. Having a score above the regression line indicates that a participant experiences this type of microaggression more often than average.
Assumptions of Inferiority

Figure 3. Scatterplot with regression line showing all 11 participant scores across the four questions for the theme Assumptions of Inferiority.

The scatterplot in Figure 3 shows that more than half of the participants scored above average among the four questions for Assumptions of Inferiority. This indicates that Black college students on campus have experienced microaggressions that fall under this category. A majority of the scores above the regression line are closer than the scores below the regression line, as all of them are exceptionally far.
Second-Class Citizen & Assumptions of Criminality

Figure 4. Scatterplot with regression line showing all 11 participant scores across four questions for the theme Second Class Citizen & Assumptions of Criminality.

For the theme of Second Citizen and Assumptions of Criminality, about half of the participants scored lower than the average while the other half scored above average. It must be noted that some participants are extremely far from the regression line, like participants 11 and 9. On the other hand, some scored extremely close to the regression line like participants 1 and 10. While some participants report low frequency of this category of microaggressions, others reported higher than one would like.
For the category of Microinvalidations, more than half of the participants reported lower than average, while only five participants scored above average. The points for those above the line are generally farther than those below the average. It seems that for the participants who scored below average, the points are somewhat more clustered than those above the regression line. Participants 3, 4, and 6 scored the same amount of points, as did participants 2 and 9.
Figure 6. Scatterplot with regression line showing all 11 participant scores across 4 questions for the theme Exoticization & Assumptions of Similarity.

A majority of participants scored remarkably low for this category. Participants 1, 2, 4, and 9 all generated the same score, as did participants 6, 7, and 11. For the participants who scored above the regression line, their scores all varied. Despite many participants scoring below average, some of the scores for the participants above the line are quite alarming. For instance, participant number 8 scored a total of 10 points while participant number 5 scored a total of 8 points. It can be assumed that the regression line is positive because of the higher four scores compared to the low variability of scores that other participants recorded.
Environmental

Figure 7. Scatterplot with regression line showing all 11 participant scores across 4 questions for the theme Environmental.

Generally speaking, a majority of participant scores for this theme are relatively close to the regression line. More than half of the participants scored just above average while only 4 participants scored below average. Among the four participants who scored below average, participant number 8 scored the lowest with a total of 2 points. On the other hand, participant number one scored a total of 10 points. The scores of the participants for this category reflect that environmental microaggressions have been recognized.
Lastly, the results for the category of *Workplace & School* microaggressions show that about half of the participants scored below average while the other half scored above average. A majority of the participants who scored above the regression line have points relatively far from the average. For a majority of the participants who scored below the regression line, their points also are a bit further away from the average.
Discussion

Given the results, the first and second hypotheses stated were found to be inconclusive. Since the association between stress and cultural taxation was found to be \( r(9) = -0.39, 95\% \ CI [-2.00, 0.92], \ p = 1.000 \) (Table 2), it does not support the first hypothesis that indicated that there would be a strong positive correlation between both variables. Findings for the relationship between stress and microaggressions were also found, \( r(9) = 0.08, 95\% \ CI [-1.29, 1.44], \ p = 0.422 \) (Table 4), to not support the second hypothesis which indicated that there would be a strong positive correlations between both variables. The p values for both partial correlational tests were both > 0.05, indicating that the results were not statistically significant in either test.

The third hypothesis, where it was expected that black women would have higher scores than their black male counterparts on all three sections of the survey, could not be tested given two complications. In the Cultural Taxation/Identity Scale section of the survey, one of the questions asks for participants to select their gender identity. However, the options given do not allow for participants to differentiate between ‘male’ or ‘female’ and instead had them together in one option; cisgender. While the term cisgender is an accepted label in conversations surrounding gender, it does not allow for specificit. Instead of just the term cisgender, it should be broken into two choices, cisgender female and cisgender male. These choices encompass the binary that is necessary for the third hypothesis. It should also be noted that the survey did not gather enough participants for the third hypothesis to be tested. The methodology impacted the information given for the third hypothesis, while the sample size affected the spread and distribution of the data.

Initially, the goal was to sample 30-40 participants. However, the survey was only able to sample eleven participants. The IRB form to register the study was sent to the Institutional
Review Board on February 2, 2023. Further revisions were requested by the IRB on February 13, 2023. Revisions were sent almost a month later on March 15, 2023, after obtaining appropriate materials to adhere to the twenty-one revisions the IRB required. Three days later, on March 18, 2023, the study was approved by the IRB. Among the concerns of the IRB was an issue about whether students should self-identify as black. Instead of using the term ‘black college student’ I was instructed to use the term ‘self-identifying black college student.’ The problem with using ‘self-identifying’ is that anyone can self identify as black and not be seen as incorrect. This casts a shadow over individuals who did not choose to be black but are just regarded as a black person. I believe the term ‘self-identifying’ caters to those who are phenotypically ambiguous and can pick and choose their identities, but for my study that is not the case. A racially ambiguous person’s experience is not going to be the same as a black person’s. In the same breath as there is no black monolith there are touchstones that allow black people to identify with each other. Essentially, if an ambiguous person is constantly regarded as something other than what they identify themselves as, the same cannot be said for those who are phenotypically black. There are no questions surrounding your identity, you are labeled black as soon as your phenotype confirms it.

Contrary to Sherry Chowhury’s findings in 2021, Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) scores did not positively correlate with Cultural Taxation/Identity Scale scores. However, the duration of the survey was rather short. The time constraint is likely a factor that affected the sample size. Furthermore, in Chowdhury’s study, she sampled ethnic minority students living on campus. It is a possibility that because of the population specificity, that being Black students living on campus, the sample group was only able to The ethnic-minority student population on campus is already small, since Bard College is formally recognized as a predominantly white institution.
For reference, the incoming freshmen class of 2026 of Bard College has a black population of only 6% compared to the incoming white population of 69%. The lack of black students on campus suggests two things; every black student on campus can most likely identify other black students on campus and every black students on campus is a part of a social circle with at least one other black person. Of course there are exceptions, generally speaking however, the chance that black students normally interact with each other is high. It is not safe to assume that the sample size reflects the black student population on campus due to the unknown actual number of black students on campus. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that Black students attending Bard College face both microaggressions and cultural taxation.

**Conclusion**

The main goal of this study was to call attention to the relationships Black women have with stress, microaggressions, and cultural taxation. While I was not able to test the third hypothesis of this study because of methodological complications, the first two hypotheses were still tested. Regardless of the inability to test the third hypothesis and the results of the first two hypotheses, it is quite evident that stress, microaggressions, and cultural taxation remain to be problems for many Black individuals. For Black women, this remains scarcely explored and thus continues to perpetuate harmful misinformation. We can see that the stress many BIPOC experience can in part be related to either cultural taxation or microaggressions because we live those experiences. I would be lying to myself and others if I said I have never experienced a microaggression or a culturally taxing situation. It is those racial experiences that make the consequences of skin color awfully real. But it is those same racial experiences that provokes my sense of justice for my community. Thus I will continue to strive for a society that acknowledges
the damage it has done unto others. Naturally, beloved author Toni Morrison put it best when she stated “I get angry about things, then go on and work.”

References


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https://doi.org/10.1177/0095798409353757

https://doi.org/10.1177/0095798409353755


## Appendix A

### Section 1

Please enter the following information about yourself:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Today's date:</strong></th>
<th>Feb 02, 2023</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Name:</strong></td>
<td>Roxanna Delgado</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Email:</strong></td>
<td><a href="mailto:rd8717@bard.edu">rd8717@bard.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Your Academic Program/Department/Office:</strong></td>
<td>Psychology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Your status (faculty, staff, graduate or undergraduate student):</strong></td>
<td>Undergraduate student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adviser or Faculty Sponsor (if applicable):</strong></td>
<td>Elena Kim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>If you are a graduate or undergraduate student, has your Adviser or Faculty Sponsor seen and approved your application?</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Your Adviser's or Faculty Sponsor's email address (if applicable):</strong></td>
<td><a href="mailto:ekim@bard.edu">ekim@bard.edu</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please list all individuals (full name and status, i.e. faculty, staff, student) involved in this project that will be working with human subjects. Note: Everyone listed must have completed Human Subject Research Training within the past three years.

Roxanna Delgado, student
Elena Kim, faculty

| **Do you have external funding for this research?** | No |
| **What is the title of your project?** | Black Women at PWI: Stress, Microaggressions, & Cultural Taxation |

| **When do you plan to begin this project? (Start date):** | Feb 20, 2023 |
Describe your research project:
My SPROJ focuses on black women college students, a population often overlooked in research and looked down upon in society. When thinking about common challenges faced in this country’s education system, I thought about cultural taxation and microaggressions. Cultural taxation has been coined as a burden placed upon the shoulders of ethnic faculty in servicing the educational institution by Amado Padillo in 1994, however, there is also a similar burden placed on ethnic students to conform to the stereotype they are outlined to be by others. This term not only applies to faculty, but to ethnic minority students who also have to perform. Microaggressions were founded by psychiatrist Chester M. Pierce in the early 1970s, he clarified that they were “black-white racial interactions [that] are characterized by white put-downs, done in an automatic, preconsciously, or unconscious fashion,” (p. 13). The modernized term for this would be an action or comment, either direct or indirect, towards a person of a marginalized group that gives power to the prejudiced attitudes of the said marginalized group. Speaking with many ethnic minorities, I have heard many stories of these types of attacks, whether the victim even recognizes it at the moment or has only interpreted that experience differently years later. The gravity and frequency of these stressors led me to think about their mental health impacts and had me questioning just how stressed my fellow black female classmates are. But then I realized that this tended to happen in schools that were predominantly white. These thoughts are what shaped the working title of my SPROJ; Black Women College Students on PWI Campus: Cultural Taxation, Microaggressions, and Stress.

Describe the population(s) you plan to recruit and how you plan to recruit participants. Please submit all recruitment material, emails and scripts to IRB@bard.edu
I plan to recruit approximately 60 black college students that attend Bard College and are also living on campus. My study will also have a gender aspect because I will use black students who are men as a comparison group for the black students that are women.

Will your participants include individuals from vulnerable or protected populations (e.g., children, pregnant women, prisoners, or the cognitively impaired)?
no

Approximately how many individuals do you expect to participate in your study?
60

Describe the procedures you will be using to conduct your research. Include descriptions of what tasks your participants will be asked to do, and about how much time will be expected of each individual.
NOTE: If you have supporting materials (printed surveys, questionnaires, interview questions, etc.), email these documents separately as attachments to IRB@bard.edu. Name your attachments with your last name and a brief description (e.g., "WatsonSurvey.doc").
Survey: Participants will be recruited through mailing lists of POC clubs and I will ask that those who take the survey should identify as black students. Only in the survey will I ask for gender. The survey will be administered on Qualtrics where they will be required to identify their gender among other demographics. The options given will be Man, Woman, Non-Binary, and Other.

Describe any risks and/or benefits your research may have for your participants.
There is a potential risk of discomfort from participation in this study, depending on whether the questions asked trigger certain memories that are painful for the participant. Should they feel threatened by the questions asked, it will be recommended that they withdraw from the survey. Besides compensation, participation in this study is also of mental interest. This is research that supports movement for equity and the disassembling of systemic injustices.

Describe how you plan to mitigate (if possible) any risks the participants may encounter.
The risks the participants may encounter are not things to be mitigated because it is a part of daily life for marginalized groups. However, the cause for such research will be emphasized in the debriefing statement. Students will also be advised to discontinue the survey if they receive mental discomfort.
Describe the consent process (i.e., how you will explain the consent form and the consent process to your participants):
I will introduce the consent form when students express interest in participating. I will then communicate that to obtain their consent means that I will be able to use the information they give on the survey for my research project. Without their consent I cannot utilize the information given.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Have you prepared a consent form(s) and emailed it as an attachment to <a href="mailto:IRB@bard.edu">IRB@bard.edu</a>?</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Note: You must submit all necessary consent forms before your proposal is considered complete.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you are collecting data via media capture (video, audio, photos), have you included a section requesting consent for this procedure(s) in your consent form(s)?

| What procedures will you use to ensure that the information your participants provide will remain confidential and safeguarded against improper access or dissemination? |
| My surveys will be administered through Qualtrics in which I will require no identification regarding name or address. Gender and ethnicity questions will be asked as it is crucial for my study. For the focus group, I will do the same recruitment method I did for the survey, except participants will actually see each other's faces. I can address participants by randomly assigning them a number that only I am aware of or I can ask them to give aliases at the beginning of the discussion for the transcription's sake. All data collected will be number coded. The transcriptions will also be anonymized. All of the recordings gathered will be stored in a password-protected folder. |

| Will it be necessary to use deception with your participants at any time during this research? Withholding details about the specifics of one's hypothesis does not constitute deception, this is called incomplete disclosure. Deception involves purposefully misleading participants about the nature of the research question or about the nature of the task they will be completing. |
| No |

For all projects, please include your debriefing statement. (This is information you provide to the participant at the end of your study to explain your research question more fully than you may have been able to do at the beginning of the study.) All studies must include a debriefing statement. Be sure to give participants the opportunity to ask any additional questions they may have about the study.

Thank you for your participation in my study. The purpose of the survey is to find associations between cultural taxation and microaggressions on stress. The population of interest in this study is black women students at PWIs (Predominantly White Institutions) with black men students as a comparison group. Within the study there were two main hypotheses; I hypothesize that cultural taxation and stress will have a strong positive association and microaggressions and stress will also generate a strong positive association. The three survey parts were assigned to assess stress, microaggressions, and cultural taxation. Demographic information collected at the end of the survey will be used to compare the sample of interest with black men students. Marginalized groups of people are often misrepresented in psychology, which perpetuates harmful stereotypes of ethnic-minority groups within the societal script. Your participation is greatly appreciated, it is putting in effort towards equity and truth.
You will now be asked to provide the last three digits of your college I.D. number so your compensation can be mailed to you.

If you any questions about the study please feel free to contact us: Roxanna Delgado, rd8717@bard.edu. Elena Kim, PhD, ekim@bard.edu.

| If you will be conducting interviews in a language other than English, will you conduct all of the interviews yourself, or will you have the assistance of a translator? If you will be using the assistance of a translator, that individual must also certify that he or she is familiar with the human subject protocol and has completed the online training course. | Not applicable |
| If your recruitment materials or consent forms will be presented in languages other than English, please translate these documents and email copies to IRB@bard.edu. I have submitted all of my translated materials. | Not applicable |
Date: 3/18/2023  
To: Roxanna Delgado  
Cc: Elena Kim; Nazir Nazari  
From: Ziad M. Abu-Rish, IRB Chair  
Re: Black Women at PWI: Stress, Microaggressions, & Cultural Taxation

**DECISION: APPROVAL**

Dear Roxanna Delgado:

The Bard IRB committee has reviewed your revised proposal. Your application is approved through March 18, 2024. Your case number is 2023NAR18-DEL.

Please notify the IRB if your methodology changes or unexpected events arise. We wish you the best of luck with your research.

Ziad M. Abu-Rish, Ph.D.  
IRB Chair  
Associate Professor of Human Rights and Middle Eastern Studies  
Bard College  
zaburish@bard.edu
Appendix C

Consent Form

Principal Investigator
Roxanna Delgado
Psychology Program
Bard College

Project Title
Black Women at PWI: Stress, Microaggressions, & Cultural Taxation

Introduction
You are being invited to participate in a senior project research survey conducted by a student of the Psychology program at Bard College. Please read the following information carefully prior to proceeding to the survey.

Purpose
The purpose of this study is to analyze the relationship between black women and stress on college campuses. Factors that may influence stress are microaggressions and cultural taxation. Especially on a PWI campus, marginalized groups are at risk of being discriminated against, either consciously or not. Oftentimes, the black student population recounts racial discrimination, and black women can experience misogynoir. Could there be an interesting correlation between stress, cultural taxation, and microaggressions? What would that imply? Are there any gender differences?

Study Procedure
If you decide to participate you will be asked to complete a survey with four different parts. The first part will ask questions about participants’ stress using the PSS (Perceived Stress Scale), which is a 10-item questionnaire that measures the perception of stress. The next part will entail questions about microaggressions utilizing the REMS (Racial and Ethnic Microaggression Scale). The final part will be questions adapted from Sherry Chowdhury’s Cultural/Identity Taxation Scale. It is a 13-item questionnaire with the last few questions explicitly asking about participant demographics (race, gender, etc.). This survey will be administered on Qualtrics and analyzed using Jamovi software. Once your participation is complete you will receive a debriefing about the multiple hypotheses in this study. The survey should take no more than 15 minutes to complete. Participation in this study is voluntary and you are able to withdraw your participation at any time without penalty.
Risks and Discomforts
There is a potential risk of discomfort from participating in this study, depending on whether the questions asked trigger certain memories that are painful for the participant. Should you feel threatened by the questions asked, it is recommended that you withdraw from the survey.

Benefits
Besides compensations, this is research that indirectly supports the movement for equity and the disassembling of systemic injustices.

Compensation
The compensation is $5 for the completion of the survey and will be distributed through Venmo.

Exclusion/Inclusion Criteria
Must be a student living on campus at the present time. Must self-identify as black. Must be 18 years of age or older.

Confidentiality
Once the survey is completed, your data will be assigned a participant identification code. Your name will not be directly linked to the data you submit. Additionally, the study data will only be accessible to study personnel through password-protected folders. At the end of the survey, you will be asked to give your mailbox number for participant compensation. The final output of this research will be a written thesis and will be made available at the Bard College library in hard copy and the Bard College Digital Commons in electronic copy. We will erase all traces of the participant's identity, including consent forms, debriefing statements, emails, etc., three years after the project is submitted.

Questions
For any and all questions about your research participant rights, you may contact the Principal Investigator, Roxanna Delgado, at rd8717@bard.edu and their advisor, Elena Kim, at ekim@bard.edu. Additionally, you may contact the Bard College IRB at irb@bard.edu for questions about your rights as a research participant.

By clicking the box below you affirm that you are 18 years of age or older.

By clicking the box below, you affirm that you have read and understood the context of the consent form.

By clicking “Yes” below you affirm that you self-identify as Black.

By clicking “Yes” below you affirm that you are living on Bard College campus.
Appendix D

Debriefing Statement

Thank you for your participation in my study. The purpose of the survey is to find associations between cultural taxation and microaggressions on stress. The population of interest in this study is self-identifying black women students at PWIs (Predominantly White Institutions) with self-identifying black men students as a comparison group. Within the study there were three main hypotheses; I hypothesize that cultural taxation and stress will have a strong positive association and microaggressions and stress will also generate a strong positive association. I also hypothesized that those who self-identified as black women will rate higher in terms of stress, cultural taxation, and microaggressions. The three survey parts were assigned to assess stress, microaggressions, and cultural taxation. Demographic information (part of the cultural taxation section) collected at the end of the survey will be used to compare the sample of interest with black men students. Marginalized groups of people are often misrepresented in psychology, which perpetuates harmful stereotypes of ethnic-minority groups within the societal script. Your participation is greatly appreciated, it is putting in effort towards equity and truth.

You will now be asked to provide the last three digits of your college I.D. number so your compensation can be mailed to you.

If you have any questions about the study please feel free to contact us: Roxanna Delgado, rd8717@bard.edu, Elena Kim, Ph.D., ekim@bard.edu. Feel free to contact irb@bard.edu for knowledge of your participant rights.
Appendix E

Pre-registration Form

Study Information

Hypotheses

It is expected that black women college students will report high levels of stress, microaggressions, and cultural taxation. It is expected that stress will positively correlate with microaggressions and cultural taxation among black women college students on a PWI.

Design Plan

Study type

Observational Study - Data is collected from study subjects that are not randomly assigned to a treatment. This includes surveys, “natural experiments,” and regression discontinuity designs.

Blinding

No blinding is involved in this study.

Is there any additional blinding in this study?

No response

Study design

This is a 20-minute correlational study survey.

No files selected

Randomization

No response

Sampling Plan

Existing Data

Registration prior to creation of data

Explanation of existing data

No response

Data collection procedures
Black Women PWI: Cultural Taxations, Microaggressions, Stress

Participants will be recruited through college club email lists. Each will be compensated $5 for completing the survey. Participants must be at least 18 years old, currently live on campus, and self-identify as black.

No files selected
Sample size

Our sample size is 60 participants maximum.

Sample size rationale

No response
Stopping rule

No response

Variables

Manipulated variables

No response

No files selected
Measured variables

Stress: Perceived Stress Scale, 0-4, 0=Never, 4=Very Often.
Microaggressions: REMS (shortened), 0-4, 0=Never, 4=Very Often.
Cultural Taxation: C&I Taxation Scale, 0-4, 0=Never, 4=Very Often.

No files selected
Indices

No response

No files selected

Analysis Plan

Statistical models

I will use Correlation Matrix Regression Analysis with the pairs being: Stress x Microaggressions, Stress x Cultural Taxation, and Microaggressions x Cultural Taxation. Additionally, I will also be conducting Linear Regression Analyses.

No files selected
Transformations

No response
Inference criteria

No response
Data exclusion

No response
Missing data
No response

Exploratory analysis
No response

Other
Other
No response