Digital Microaggressions and Queer Youth:
Incidence, Perceived Impacts, and Practice Implications

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Acknowledgements: This work was supported by a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Stage II Partnership Grant (#895-2018-1000) awarded to Dr. Shelley Craig.

Disclosure Statement: The authors report there are no competing interests to declare.

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Abstract

Queer youth frequently go online to meet their developmental and socialization needs. Digital forms of violence may impact these opportunities, though research in this area remains inadequate. This study examines experiences with digital microaggressions for 1,804 queer youth aged 14–24 across three countries. Respondents to a mixed-methods online survey shared the frequency and perceived impacts of their encounters with anti-queer digital microaggressions directed specifically at them, as well as indirectly witnessed by them while online. Overall, youth reported the near ubiquity of anti-queer microaggressions in their digital contexts. Almost all also indicated anti-queer digital microaggressions directed specifically at them at least somewhat affected their emotional well-being (94%). Harmful physical and behavioral health impacts were also reported. Importantly, these direct and indirect experiences impacted youths' feelings about being queer *and* talking about being queer. Notably, most participants also believed they grew in positive ways from being a direct target of digital microaggressions (90%). However, few queer youth reported trusting adult professionals (e.g., school counselors, teachers) to help them with these experiences. The pervasiveness and cumulative influence of digital microaggressions in queer youths' online contexts may have immediate and longer-term impacts. Implications for future research and professional practice are discussed.

Keywords: Digital; Microaggressions; Youth; Sexuality; Gender Identity

Lay Summary: This study examines the extent and impacts of digital microaggressions on 1,804 queer youth (aged 14–24). Nearly all experienced digital microaggressions, and for most these experiences negatively affected their health and feelings about being queer. Few respondents reported trusting adult professionals (e.g., school counselors, teachers) to help them.

Data Availability: The data may be available from the first author upon reasonable request.

Introduction

Research on queer[1] adolescents and transitional-aged young adults (i.e., youth) has substantiated persistent disparities and continued vulnerabilities to compromised psychosocial, physical, and behavioral health (Fish, 2020; Russell & Fish, 2020). This is particularly the case for transgender and gender expansive youth, who experience the highest likelihoods of adverse health outcomes (Delozier et al., 2020). When compared to their cisgender, heterosexual (i.e., non-queer) peers, queer youth have multifold higher risks of mental health difficulties, including anxiety, depression, and suicidality. They are also at heightened risk for behavioral issues, including substance misuse and self-harm (Delozier et al., 2020, Fish, 2020; Russell & Fish, 2020). Queer youth continue to experience various forms of violence in their homes, schools, and communities from their families, peers, and other developmentally significant individuals—oftentimes without the ability to escape these harmful experiences or access identity-affirming support (Removed for Review 1; Fish, 2020).

Given the disparities and risks in their day-to-day lives, many queer youth turn to internet-enabled information and communication technologies (I-ICTs; e.g., mobile devices) to meet their multidimensional health, developmental, and socialization needs. Daily use of I-ICTs is virtually ubiquitous among adolescents and young adults in the United States (U.S.) and comparable countries, including active use of a range of social media platforms (Removed for Review 1; Berger et al., 2022). Queer youth have been found to use I-ICTs at even higher rates than their cisgender, heterosexual peers (Hatchel et al., 2021)—with one recent study finding sexual minority status was associated with over three hours of additional recreational screen time per day (Nagata et al., 2023). Entrenched in queer youths' lives, I-ICTs facilitate access to

[1] The term 'queer' is used throughout this paper to be inclusive of the wide diversity of youths' identities and the overlap of gender, sexuality, and other related constructs.

identity-specific resources; representative media content; exploration, rehearsal, labeling, and management of their queer identities; and important social connections, including to peers and role models (Berger et al., 2022; Hatchel et al., 2021; Hinduja & Patchin, 2020).

However, despite the opportunities offered by I-ICTs, queer youth do not escape the simultaneous risk of encountering digital prejudice and discrimination. Research indicates queer youth disproportionately experience cyberbullying, resulting in outcomes such as increased psychological distress, depression, and suicidality (Removed For Review 2; Abreu & Kenny, 2018; Hinduja & Patchin, 2020). Queer youth may also be at elevated risk of other I-ICT based problems, including various forms of online harassment and exploitation, resulting in a range of health and mental health problems (Abreu & Kenny, 2018; Hatchel et al., 2021). Importantly, while queer youth undeniably experience elevated risks when using I-ICTs, it should also be emphasized that they continue to experience elevated risks in their 'in-person' contexts. Thus, queer youth are forced to navigate stigma-related stressors across all contexts of their lives (Removed from Review 2).

While there continues to be a lack of consensus on the operational definition for cyberbullying (Hatchel et al., 2021), it is generally conceptualized as 'in-person' bullying using I-ICTs. Based upon that premise, cyberbullying necessitates several specific features characteristic of bullying, including the intentional infliction of harm; that the violence is recurrent; and that there is a power imbalance between those involved (Removed for Review 3; Macaulay et al., 2022). However, much of the digital prejudice and discrimination that queer youth encounter in their daily use of I-ICTs do not meet these criteria (Removed for Review 2; Removed for Review 3). Thus, it can be argued that much (or even most) of the identity-based violence and victimization queer youth are reported to experience via I-ICTs is inappropriately

categorized as cyberbullying (Hatchel et al., 2021).

The forms of digital violence and victimization queer youth encounter remain poorly understood, as do the consequences of these experiences. In particular, the manifestation of more tacit forms of digital prejudice and discrimination requires greater attention. Microaggressions are typically defined as daily incidents of hostility, disparagement, and indignities encountered by marginalized people (Marchi et al., 2024). Microaggressions commonly experienced by queer populations include a variety of intentional or unintentional actions by perpetrators, such as spreading harmful misinformation, using anti-queer language, undermining queer identities and experiences, and making heteronormative and cisnormative assumptions (Nadal, 2018). Each of these actions is also possible to perpetrate using I-ICTs (Removed for Review 1).

To date, the characterization and impacts of digitally perpetrated microaggressions have not been adequately examined. Scant research on racial minority youth has indicated that digital microaggressions could include denigration or exclusion of individuals and communities via digitally transmitted "symbols, voice [audio], video, images, text and graphic representations" (Tynes, 2015, para. 4). Given research on the consequences of anti-queer microaggressions for the mental and behavioral health of queer people—including increased depression, suicidality, and substance misuse—it is critical to bring focused attention to the incidence and potential impacts of microaggressions perpetrated via I-ICTs (Marchi et al., 2024; Nadal, 2018).

Theoretical Framework

Application of the minority stress model enriches understanding of the potential harmful effects of digital microaggressions. The distinctive stressors minority individuals (e.g., racial, ethnic, sexual, gender minorities) experience related to their marginalized social status may be conceptualized as contributing to minority stress (Meyer, 2003). For queer youth, minority stress

refers to the identity-based prejudice (e.g., queer stereotypes in online content), discrimination (e.g., being excluded from digital spaces), and violence (e.g., being attacked on social media for being queer) they encounter (Removed for Review, 2). A fundamental feature of the minority stress model is recognizing the compounded consequences of individuals experiencing identity-based stressors *on top* of general life stress (Green et al., 2022; Meyer, 2003). Anti-queer digital microaggressions may negatively impact queer youths' well-being, comprising a distinct contribution to their accumulated stress and worsened outcomes (Keighley, 2021). Thus, this study examines experiences with digital microaggressions by queer adolescents and transitional-aged young adults (aged 14–24) across three developed countries. Respondents (n = 1,804) to a mixed-methods online survey shared the frequency and perceived impacts of their encounters with anti-queer digital microaggressions directed specifically at them, as well as indirectly witnessed by them while online.

Materials and Methods

Data for this study are from an online survey conducted November 2019–February 2020 with queer youth regarding their experiences with I-ICTs and digital violence. The survey was advertised on various social media platforms using paid and unpaid distribution pathways, targeting queer adolescents and young adults aged 14–24 living in the U.S., the United Kingdom (U.K.), and Canada. Interested youth were directed to additional information about the study and—depending on their age at the time of participation—provided either independent assent (for participants 14–17) or consent (for participants 18+) in Qualtrics. Minors were permitted to provide independent assent as a safeguard to unintentional identity disclosure to unsupportive parents or guardians, among other possible risk factors (Removed for Review 4). Participants then accessed the survey, which comprised a series of instruments on (1) demographics and

queer identity; (2) digital violence; and (3) multidimensional health and well-being. The survey took approximately 33.34 minutes (*SD* = 9.21) on average to complete. Participants were offered the opportunity to enter a raffle for one of 40 gift cards worth $25 USD. All study procedures were approved by the Institutional Review Board at [REMOVED FOR REVIEW].

Sample

Following a rigorous multi-step procedure to identify and remove potential bots and false respondents, a total sample of 1,804 queer youth (M_{age} = 16.0, *SD* = 1.94) was generated. They were from Canada (22.1%), the US (31.5%), and the UK (46.5%). Importantly, participants were allowed to select multiple racial, ethnic, sexual, and gender identities if more than one applied to them. Most identified as White (97.8%), while some identified as Hispanic (10.0%), Asian (6.0%), Native American/Indigenous (3.3%), and Black (2.6%). Regarding sexuality, participants identified as bisexual (37.6%), lesbian (25.2%), queer (21.8%), pansexual (17.7%), gay (16.5%), questioning (15.9%), asexual (10.9%), demisexual (6.9%), straight (1.3%), two-spirit (.4%), and other (3.8%). Additionally, participants identified their gender identity as woman (41.1%), non-binary (19.8%), trans man/trans masculine (18.5%), transgender (16.0%), man (13.6%), gender non-conforming (8.5%), genderqueer (7.5%), genderfluid (5.4%), agender (4.8%), trans woman/trans feminine (1.3%), gender expansive (.8%), two-spirit (.4%), and other (2.7%). Overall, 43.6% of participants identified as transgender or selected another term indicating gender diversity. Finally, most participants were assigned female at birth (87.4%) while some were assigned male (10.9%), intersex (.1%), or chose not to respond (1.6%).

Measures

Technology Use

Participants were asked a variety of questions about their technology use. For example,

"On a typical day, how often do you go online in general?" with the response options *less than once*, *once*, *2-5 times*, *6-10 times*, *11-15 times*, *more than 15 times*, and *almost constantly*. Similar questions were asked about participants' use of social media and messaging apps. Participants also shared which platforms (e.g., social media, websites, apps) they used most and which devices they used to access those platforms. Questions were developed based on those posed by the PEW Research Center to youth in studies of technology use (Anderson et al., 2023).

Digital Microaggressions and Impacts

Participants were provided a series of 68 anti-queer digital microaggressions they may have experienced via I-ICTs, using the terminology LGBTQ+[2], including: 42 experiences that could have ***directly targeted*** the participant (e.g., "Someone told me it's wrong to be LGBTQ+ or said or implied that I was going to hell because of my LGBTQ+ identity"); and 26 experiences that may have been ***indirectly experienced*** by the participant (e.g., "Someone said or implied that LGBTQ+ people are perverts or deviants"). Participants were asked to provide the frequency of their experiences for each item, *never; rarely (less than once a month); sometimes (1-3 times a month); Often (1-3 times a week); or daily*. Exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses of these items is under review elsewhere.

Following identification by the participant of which of the 68 possible microaggressions they had encountered and how frequently they did so, participants were ***twice*** provided with a list of 56 possible ways that digital microaggressions may have impacted them—once for the 42 direct microaggressions and once for the 26 indirect microaggressions. The 56 impact items were developed from the Research Team's previous scholarship, as well as research by Dredge and

[2] The initialism LGBTQ+ (i.e., lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and other sexual and gender minorities) was used in the survey. That terminology is used when discussing measures and results to accurately depict the scope of the study findings.

colleagues (2015) on the prevalence and potential impacts of cyberbullying. The impact items were organized into six sub-scales. Specifically, participants were asked to indicate how much their (1) emotional well-being (9 items; e.g., "I felt anxious"); (2) physical health (10 items; e.g., "I had stomach aches"); (3) behavior (14 items; e.g., "I ignored the situation or person"); (4) LGBTQ+ identity (6 items; e.g., "I felt worse about being an LGBTQ+ person"); (5) peer relations (9 items; e.g., "I felt like friends no longer trusted me"); and (6) positive growth (8 items; e.g., "I learned more about myself") were impacted by each type (i.e., direct and indirect) of microaggressions they experienced. Response options included *I was not affected this way at all*, *I was affected this way a little bit*, *I was somewhat affected this way*, *I was affected this way quite a bit*, and *I was very much affected this way*.

The responses about the impacts of direct and indirect digital microaggressions were dummy-coded in two ways. Firstly, for each of the 57 impact items responses of *I was not affected this way at all* were recoded to equal 0 and all other responses (*I was affected this way a little bit—I was very much affected this way*) were recoded to equal 1. The six domains of impact were then individually summed to create 12 sub-scales—six on the impacts of direct microaggressions and six on the impacts of indirect microaggressions. These subscales were used to determine the proportion of participants who reported they were affected at all by any item of each domain. Secondly, the same items were dummy-coded so that responses of *I was somewhat affected this way*, *I was affected this way quite a bit*, and *I was very much affected this way* were combined to equal 1 and other responses (i.e., *I was not affected this way at all* and *I was affected this way a little bit*) were combined to equal 0. Frequency counts were then used to report the percentage of participants who said they were at least somewhat affected by the digital microaggressions they encountered. Again, the items in each domain of impact were summed to

create 12 scales (six direct and six indirect) to determine the proportion of participants who reported they were at least somewhat affected in at least one way included in each in each domain.

Adult Support Systems

Participants selected all groups of adults they trusted to support youth who experienced anti-queer digital microaggressions. Options included doctors, neighbors, parents, religious leaders, school counselors, social workers, teachers, therapists, LGBTQ+ adults, and other adults. Youth could also select "I do not think adults would be helpful."

Data Analysis

Data analysis was performed using SPSS (Version 26). As mentioned, to better understand participants' I-ICT usage, the number of times participants went online per day (1) in general; (2) on social media; and (3) on messaging apps were calculated. Similar frequency counts determined which online platforms and devices participants used the most. Frequency counts were also used to report how often participants encountered different types of digital microaggressions, how they perceived digital microaggressions to impact them, and which adults they trusted for support.

Results

Technology Use

Approximately two-thirds of participants (66.1%) reported being online more than 15 times per day. Nearly half (43.6%) reported being online "almost constantly." In contrast, only 4.1% of participants reported being online 2–5 times per day or less often. The most utilized social media platforms included Instagram (92.4%), Snapchat (53.7%), Facebook (46.6%), YouTube (46.4%), and TikTok (26.9%). The popularity of these platforms is consistent with

other recent research on social media use patterns by youth populations (Anderson et al., 2023). Participants also indicated they were often active on a variety of ICT devices—both mobile (e.g., tablets, laptops) and non-mobile (e.g., desktop computers, game consoles). See Tables 1 and 2 for further details.

[Insert Tables 1 and 2 Here]

Incidences and Impacts of Digital Microaggressions

Participants reported how frequently they experienced and how much they were affected by anti-queer digital microaggressions (1) directly targeting them and (2) that they may have indirectly encountered or observed while using I-ICTs. Notably, nearly all participants (98.6%) experienced at least one digital microaggression at least sometimes (i.e., 1 to 3 times per month). More specifically, 91.2% of participants experienced at least one digital microaggression directed at them sometimes, while 98.5% experienced at least one indirect digital microaggression sometimes. Similarly, many participants (68.3%) experienced at least one direct digital microaggression often (i.e., at least once per week) and most (89.3%) experienced at least one indirect digital microaggression often. A substantial minority of participants (28.7%) experienced at least one direct digital microaggression daily while over half of participants (55.0%) experienced at least one indirect digital microaggression daily.

Participants were impacted by both direct and indirect anti-queer digital microaggressions in a variety of ways. Almost all said these digital microaggressions directed at them at least somewhat negatively affected their emotional well-being (93.9%) and behavior (92.7%). Most also mentioned that direct digital microaggressions at least somewhat negatively affected their physical health (81.1%), queer identit(ies) (86.6%), and peer relations (85.4%). However, most participants (89.8%) also believed they experienced positive growth from being a direct target of

digital microaggressions. Importantly, more participants reported being more affected by direct digital microaggressions than indirect digital microaggressions in each domain. Nonetheless, most still reported that indirect anti-queer digital microaggressions at least somewhat negatively affected them, including their emotional well-being (92.5%), physical health (58.6%), behavior (89.7%), queer identity (77.8%), and peer relations (74.5%). As with direct microaggressions, most participants felt like they experienced at least some positive growth from witnessing digital microaggressions (79.4%). See Table 3 for further details.

[Insert Table 3 Here]

Adult Support Systems

Some participants (12.0%) did not think any group of adults would be helpful with processing and addressing their experiences with digital microaggressions. Nevertheless, while most (80.4%) indicated queer-identified adults could be trusted as a source of support, less than half of participants believed therapists (47.4%), teachers (35.7%), school counselors (32.6%), social workers (22.5%), or other professionals could be trusted to support them (see Table 4). Importantly, 32.6% of participants did not respond to any part of the question, including to the option that no adults were helpful, resulting in 589 missing responses. This was likely due to the sections on social support appearing near the end of the survey.

[Insert Table 4 Here]

Discussion

The queer youth participating in this study were avid I-ICT users, with virtually all participants online at least a few times per day. This is consistent with research on general youth populations (Anderson et al., 2023) and indications that queer youth may use I-ICTs at significantly higher rates than their non-queer peers (Nagata et al., 2023). Youth reported

alarmingly frequent experiences with both direct and indirect digital microaggressions, as well as substantial effects—including on their queer identities. Taken altogether, findings suggest that queer youth experience pervasive digital violence and are markedly impacted across multiple domains of their health and well-being—primarily negatively, but occasionally constructively. The likelihood of harmful impacts is especially concerning, given the potential to compound queer youths' already existing health disparities.

Direct and Indirect Microaggressions

More than one in four (28.7%) youth reported daily experiences with microaggressions *directed specifically at them* and an overwhelming majority experienced these types of microaggressions multiple times per month. Participants' responses to the six domains of potential impacts demonstrated the breadth and depth of the self-perceived consequences of these digital microaggressions, with the large majority experiencing negative impacts in multiple domains. Findings also indicated impacts (86.6%) on youths' queer identit(ies) in both negative and positive ways. Importantly, many believed that they also experienced positive growth from being a direct target of digital microaggressions (89.8%). Thus, it is useful to further parse item differences within the domains of potential impact. For example, participants reported feeling angry, frustrated, upset, and anxious more often than other areas within the emotional domain. This points to the possibility that digital microaggressions—in alignment with minority stress theory (Meyer, 2003) and research on in-person microaggressions (Marchi et al., 2024; Nadal, 2018)—could particularly worsen anxiety and/or depressive symptoms.

Participants reported *indirectly witnessing* digital microaggressions more frequently than directly experiencing them. Specifically, over half of participants (55.0%) indirectly witnessed digital microaggressions daily, while virtually all participants indirectly witnessed digital

microaggressions multiple times per month. Although indirectly witnessing digital microaggressions was more common than directly experiencing them, youth reported that indirectly witnessing digital microaggressions had less of an impact. Nevertheless, indirectly witnessing digital microaggressions still had notable impacts, including on participants' queer identit(ies) (77.8%) in both positive and negative ways. No prior research exists on the impacts of observing digital microaggressions. However, proxy research on cyberbullying indicates that youth are significantly impacted by being bystanders (i.e., witnesses) to digital violence, including increasing their anxiety, depression, and somatic symptoms (Doumas & Midgett, 2020) when compared to non-bystanders. As stereotypes and other forms of misinformation about queer people are common digital microaggressions encountered by queer youth, it is worth noting that these experiences may be "especially detrimental for [queer] youth because they are more reliant on online resources and psychoeducation specific to their development" (Hatchel et al., 2021, p.310) due to barriers in their offline lives.

Implications for Research and Practice

Study findings point to the need for further inquiries into the prevalence and possible effects of experiencing digital microaggressions for marginalized youth populations, with investigations prioritizing the potential multidimensional health effects and mechanisms to mitigate the potential risks. Overall, experiencing digital microaggressions caused participants to report feeling worse, rather than better, about being queer—though many also felt like they grew at least somewhat from navigating these negative experiences. What follows are several areas worthy of further consideration of both researchers and practitioners in this future work.

Digital Overuse

Pervasive use of I-ICTs is frequently conceptualized as overuse (i.e., digital addiction), raising significant concerns for queer youth considering the reportedly frequent rates of encounters with digital microaggressions. Research similarly indicates they often become victims of other forms of I-ICT violence (e.g., cyberbullying; Abreu & Kenny, 2018; Hatchel et al., 2021). Thus, active I-ICT use by queer youth is often presumed in research and by practice professionals to be maladaptive (Removed for Review, 1). However, it must be reiterated that queer youth often cannot escape harmful in-person experiences or access identity-affirming supports offline (Fish, 2020). For these youth, who also experience pervasive violence in their offline contexts, their increased use of I-ICTs (even in contexts of elevated risk) can be reconceptualized as adaptive or proactive (Hatchel et al., 2021). Relatedly, Nagata and colleagues (2023) recently argued that "minority stress may contribute to the nature of activities [cisgender, queer] adolescents choose to engage in" (p. 54). For example, collective school-based activities versus independent recreational activities (like use of I-ICTs). While encountering risk of victimization in virtually all their offline and online contexts, contemporary queer youths' use of I-ICTs continues to offer unique opportunities for psychological respite, identity development, and community-building (Berger et al., 2022; Hatchel et al., 2021; Hinduja & Patchin, 2020).

Lack of Trust and Support

Given many queer youths' continued exposure to violence in their homes, schools, etc.—including from developmentally significant adults—it is perhaps unsurprising that many participants did not think adults (apart from possibly queer-identified adults) could be helpful when they were experiencing digital microaggressions. However, well-trained adults continue to have important roles to play in mitigating queer youths' experiences of prejudice and discrimination, including affirming their queer identities through thoughtfully designed

interventions.

Intervention Development

Given the lack of trust in adults, researchers and practitioners should explore the potential for encouraging supportive in-person and/or digital intergenerational activities between queer youth and queer adults—who due to their shared identities and (to some degree) experiences may feel safer to youth. Additionally, these finding are indicative that online peer support groups may also be beneficial for LGBTQ+ youth, perhaps with moderation by adult professionals. A successful example of this adult-facilitated peer model is Q Chat Space (Fish et al., 2022).

There is also a need to continue to develop, implement, and evaluate evidence-based trainings to empower various professionals who interact regularly with youth (e.g., teachers, school counselors, librarians) to demonstrate they are safe individuals and able provide support and identity-affirmation to queer youth when they experience digital prejudice or discrimination. The data on positive growth in response to digital microaggressions in this study is promising, providing optimism for the potential usefulness of interventions to enhance youths' and professionals' abilities to cope with and successfully navigate an often hostile digital landscape. Additionally, the most impactful positive growth effects reported relate to becoming more sensitive and appreciative, suggesting interventions should consider incorporating content that encourages these characteristics.

However, it is important to acknowledge that the ability to carry out this work is currently under threat—particularly in the U.S., but in all three countries where data was collected—by policies requiring various professionals to 'out' youth (i.e., disclose their queer status to parents or guardians) or prevent any discussions including queerness (e.g., banning inclusive sexual education). These barriers are extremely concerning, as lower outness and lower likelihood to

talk about being queer can be associated with worsened mental health (Skidmore et al., 2023). Queer youth deserve access to safe adults and developmentally appropriate resources both online and offline, including feeling comfortable sharing their identities if they choose to.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. As mentioned, participants were avid users of ICTs. While this is consistent with previous research into the population (e.g., Nagata et al., 2023), it could also be attributed to the digital approach to data collection via an online survey. In other words, digitally active youth may have been more likely to participate in an internet-based study. Additionally, these data were collected just prior to the emergence of the coronavirus epidemic (COVID-19), which is likely to have altered youths' relationship with I-ICTs in some way. Finally, it is also necessary to acknowledge that the low trustworthiness expressed by youth for some categories of adults in this study could be due to an overall lack of access to or lack of familiarity with certain types of professionals (e.g., lack of social workers in schools).

Conclusion

This study contributes to the scant research on the incidence and perceived impacts of digital microaggressions for queer adolescents and young adults. Participants reported the inescapabilty and consequences of both direct and indirect anti-queer digital microaggressions in their online contexts. While many reported believing they experienced positive growth when encountering digital microaggressions, most simultaneously indicated digital microaggressions negatively affected multiple aspects of their and their views on their own queer identit(ies). Minority stress theory suggests that the pervasiveness and potentially cumulative effects of digital microaggressions may have immediate and longer-term impacts, requiring sustained attention by researcher and providers—particularly given relatively few youth reported trusting

adult professionals to help them.

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Table 1.

Queer Youths' Daily Online Activities

Number of Times Per Day	On Social Media		On Messaging Apps		Overall	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Less than once	6	.3	32	1.8	1	.1
Once	7	.4	66	3.7	1	.1
2-5 times	143	7.9	355	19.7	71	3.9
6-10 times	312	17.3	319	17.7	285	15.8
11-15 times	284	15.7	259	14.4	255	14.1
More than 15 times	434	24.1	334	18.5	405	22.5
Almost constantly	618	34.3	439	24.3	786	43.6

Table 2.

Queer Youths' Digital Devices (Used to go Online at Least Once Per Week)

Device	n	%
Smartphone	1775	98.4
Computer	1427	79.1
Gaming Device	607	33.6
Tablet	369	20.5
Smart TV	357	19.8
Wearable Device	79	4.4
Unsure	67	3.7
Other	10	0.6

Note. Participants were able to select multiple responses.

Table 3.

Impacts of Digital Microaggressions

Domain	Item	Direct			Indirect			Overall		
		Not Affected	At Least Somewhat Affected	*n*	Not Affected	At Least Somewhat Affected	*n*	Not Affected	At Least Somewhat Affected	*n*
Emotion		1.5	93.9	1409	2.0	92.5	1150	1.3	95.2	1619
	I felt angry.	8.4	46.4	1407	8.6	57.3	1147	5.9	80.9	1618
	I felt frustrated.	5.5	61.8	1402	6.6	61.7	1143	4.2	76.4	1612
	I felt upset.	8.6	54.9	1402	10.3	50.0	1140	6.7	79.5	1615
	I was in shock.	34.3	21.0	1405	37.5	23.4	1142	29.0	47.1	1615
	I felt like I had no control.	21.4	34.1	1405	25.1	35.5	1145	17.2	62.8	1615
	I felt embarrassed.	28.5	32.5	1406	46.1	18.9	1141	29.3	51.0	1615
	I felt anxious.	12.3	54.1	1404	25.7	39.0	1142	13.8	61.1	1614
	I felt worthless.	29.7	38.4	1405	42.2	26.2	1141	29.7	53.7	1614
	I felt lost.	34.9	30.7	1406	47.5	22.1	1140	34.6	46.5	1615
Physical Health		7.5	81.1	1383	23.3	58.6	1131	9.1	78.1	1587
	I had headaches/migraines.	45.4	25.1	1378	64.3	11.9	1130	47.2	28.2	1585
	I vomited.	79.2	7.8	1378	89.1	3.5	1124	80.3	11.6	1583
	My heart rate was often fast.	21.4	38.5	1378	40.4	23.9	1124	23.7	59.0	1584
	I had stomach aches.	43.5	24.7	1378	61.0	14.2	1119	45.3	39.0	1581
	My eating habits changed (more or less).	37.8	33.9	1376	60.1	17.9	1121	40.5	45.2	1581
	My sleep was disturbed.	24.2	29.8	1378	45.4	22.5	1122	26.2	55.3	1583
	I drank alcohol more than usual.	74.6	10.5	1376	83.6	5.5	1122	75.6	16.9	1581
	I use drugs not prescribed to me more than usual.	83.4	7.7	1376	89.5	4.8	1119	84.1	11.3	1580
	I used drugs prescribed to me more than usual.	86.4	5.8	1372	91.1	2.6	1116	86.6	8.1	1577
	I stopped being as physically active as usual.	44.3	23.4	1374	65.7	12.0	1117	46.8	34.8	1580
Behavior		1.4	92.7	1315	4.9	89.7	1096	1.3	95.7	1507
	I ignored the situation or person.	12.3	43.5	1313	21.9	34.9	1093	9.4	74.3	1505
	I avoided the situation or person.	13.1	48.9	1308	22.3	36.5	1089	10.5	74.4	1501
	I focused on things other than the situation or person.	14.2	43.8	1307	20.3	40.5	1086	10.7	74.6	1502

	I stopped using my social networking site(s) or online account(s).	56.9	15.2	1310	66.7	7.7	1082	53.4	28.5	1503
	I deleted my social networking site(s) or online account(s).	77.9	7.6	1309	87.5	4.0	1060	77.2	14.2	1488
	I stopped using the internet as much.	64.4	10.0	1307	68.3	6.6	1062	60.4	20.0	1491
	I changed the way I communicated with others on the internet.	40.1	23.2	1306	50.1	15.1	1061	37.0	42.4	1490
	I blocked/hid the post or person.	24.7	47.4	1305	33.2	36.5	1061	21.7	66.4	1490
	I reported the person to the social networking site, or to an administrator/moderator.	49.0	29.9	1307	38.9	34.2	1083	37.5	51.5	1498
	I actively engaged with the post or person.	41.8	27.9	1307	46.9	22.7	1083	37.4	47.0	1499
	I spent more time with friends who were not involved.	30.6	35.9	1302	40.8	26.0	1078	27.1	56.8	1495
	I got (or tried to get) support from my friends or community.	35.2	32.9	1300	48.6	22.0	1079	32.7	53.0	1494
	I went to see a psychologist/counselor.	69.6	15.9	1305	81.8	7.1	1076	70.5	21.9	1496
	I got (or tried to get) support from a friend or other trusted adult.	51.2	20.5	1300	68.3	10.4	1071	52.1	34.3	1489
LGBTQ+		5.1	86.6	1273	9.7	77.8	1079	4.7	87.9	1459
	I felt worse about being an LGBTQ+ person.	30.9	36.6	1270	38.3	27.3	1077	29.6	53.5	1457
	I felt better about being an LGBTQ+ person.	55.5	16.0	1272	57.7	15.5	1073	46.9	34.2	1458
	I was less likely to talk about being LGBTQ+ with people online.	36.2	31.9	1267	40.2	27.2	1071	31.2	52.9	1454
	I was less likely to talk about being LGBTQ+ with people offline.	31.0	40.1	1268	40.3	22.6	1072	29.5	57.9	1453
	I was more likely to talk about being LGBTQ+ with people online.	50.6	21.9	1267	55.0	17.4	1072	44.7	29.3	1453

	I was more likely to talk about being LGBTQ+ with people offline.	59.2	16.4	1260	62.3	16.1	1070	53.5	30.0	1449
Peer Relations		5.4	85.4	1222	15.2	74.5	302	5.4	85.8	1237
	I felt like friends no longer trusted me.	55.4	14.1	1216	66.0	10.7	300	54.6	27.7	1231
	I felt like others no longer respected me.	34.1	27.5	1216	48.5	18.4	299	33.5	46.1	1231
	I felt as though others viewed me differently.	15.1	43.9	1218	27.9	34.7	297	14.8	66.4	1232
	I found others (e.g., peers) avoided me.	46.6	22.3	1216	55.6	17.5	297	46.2	38.1	1230
	I did not feel as close to my friends anymore.	46.7	24.0	1215	59.3	13.8	297	46.5	37.3	1229
	I felt that my friends trusted me more.	57.3	11.7	1215	57.0	15.4	298	55.2	26.4	1229
	I felt like my friends respected me more.	59.8	11.7	1212	55.7	16.8	298	57.0	25.8	1227
	I felt supported by my friends.	24.0	36.3	1210	35.6	26.8	298	22.8	58.8	1227
	I felt closer to my friends than before.	48.3	21.5	1207	49.8	18.9	297	45.8	38.5	1224
Growth		5.2	89.8	1183	11.6	79.4	1051	5.0	90.6	1366
	I feel like I have become a better person.	35.1	25.2	1178	45.2	17.4	1050	31.3	48.1	1361
	I learned more about myself.	24.5	39.0	1178	37.7	23.5	1048	22.4	58.3	1361
	It made me realize what was really important to me.	23.9	40.1	1176	31.5	30.4	1048	20.9	61.6	1361
	I learned to stand up for myself.	29.0	35.4	1177	40.1	25.0	1047	26.4	56.3	1360
	I learned not to care as much about what people think about me.	26.5	34.7	1176	34.7	27.8	1041	23.5	57.7	1359
	I appreciated my real friends much more.	17.2	55.4	1179	28.2	39.3	1041	15.9	72.4	1361
	I felt like a stronger person after the experience.	33.3	32.7	1175	43.8	22.4	1042	31.2	52.0	1361
	My experience made me more sensitive to others who have similar experiences.	15.5	53.4	1175	22.9	44.8	1042	14.0	75.9	1360

Table 4.

Sources of Support for Queer Youth (n = 1215)

Type of Adult(s)	Percentage Who Considered Adults a Trusted Source of Support
LGBTQ+ Adults	80.4%
Therapists	47.7%
Teachers	35.7%
School Counselors	32.6%
Parents	29.7%
Social Workers	22.5%
Doctors	17.8%
Neighbors	3.3%
Religious Leaders	2.5%
Other Adults	4.3%