Minority Stress, Intersectionality, and Mental Health among Trans POC

Presented: G. Nic Rider, Camille Brown, & Megan Roy
Presenters

G. Nic Rider, PhD (Pronouns: they/them)
Randi & Fred Ettner Postdoctoral Fellow
Program in Human Sexuality, University of Minnesota Medical School

Camille Brown, RN, BSN (Pronouns: she/her)
PhD Student
School of Nursing, University of Minnesota

Megan Roy, BS on 5/17 (Pronouns: she/her or they/them)
Research Assistant,
James Madison University
Introduction/Overview

- Definitions
- Important statistics about TGNC people of color
- Minority Stress Theory
- Intersectionality Theory
- Applications to Practice
Definitions

Transgender: Describes a person whose gender identity or expression does not align with that which was assigned to them at birth.

Genderqueer, Gender Nonconforming: Describes a person whose gender(s):
• Is/are neither male nor female, rather another gender that exists outside the gender binary
• Fall(s) within the male—female binary but are neither entirely female nor entirely male
• Is/are unfixed; changing throughout the individual’s life span (genderfluid).

People of color (POC): Term describing individuals who are non-white* that emphasizes institutional & systematic oppression as a shared experience.

*Bi- or multiracial folks who have some degree of white ancestry may also identify as POC (Zeluf et al, 2016)
Health Disparities and TPoC

Mental Health Concerns

● Among POC, racial microaggressions associated with increased suicidality (this effect is mediated by depressive symptoms) *(O’Keefe et al., 2014)*

● Suicide attempt rate alarmingly high amongst trans folks overall (~41%) *(Grant et al, 2010)*
  ○ Higher among TPoC (Asian - 39%, Latinx - 44%, African American - 45%, Multiracial - 54%, Native American - 56%) compared to White trans folks (~38%)
Health Disparities and TPoC

Physical Health Concerns

- TPoC more likely to exhibit physical conditions such as lupus, fibromyalgia, rheumatoid arthritis, gout, and asthma compared to their white counterparts (Seelman et al., 2016)
  - Environmental racism → increased exposure to environmental toxins that may hasten the onset of illness
Healthcare Access

Transphobic Experiences in Healthcare Settings

• 20-23% of trans folks denied healthcare access due to transphobia (Kattari et al., 2015)

• Roughly half of transgender folks report lack of provider knowledge
  – Often have to educate their healthcare provider about trans health (Grant et al., 2010)

• Trans people of color more likely to be refused treatment by a healthcare provider, or to experience discrimination in a variety of healthcare settings, compared to white trans folks (Grant et al., 2010; Kattari et al., 2015)
Healthcare Access

Transphobic Experiences in Healthcare Settings
Among LGBT Physicians’ Experiences in the Workplace...
• 65% have heard transphobic comments by medical staff
• 34% have witnessed discriminatory care of transgender individuals. (Eliason et al., 2011)

Counseling/Therapy Settings
• Transgender folks who have sought mental health services report that many therapists are not well-informed about trans issues.
• Therapists may attempt to emphasize the client’s gender identity during therapy, even when this is not the client’s primary motivation for seeking mental health services; may leave client feeling that the therapy experience was unhelpful. (Benson, 2012)
What underlying factors contribute to inadequate care, and subsequently poor health outcomes, amongst transgender POC?
“At the end of the day, we have to remember that bathroom access really is not about bathrooms. [It is] … about whether trans people have the right to exist in public space.”

Laverne Cox

Transgender folks encounter numerous difficulties when navigating public and institutional spaces.
TPOC & Mental Health

• Link to the Minority Stress Model: Transgender individuals’ mental health outcomes are not a manifestation of dysphoria, but instead are associated with enacted and felt stigma (Bockting et al., 2013)
TPOC & Mental Health

• Stressors associated with transphobia are further compounded by experiences of racial discrimination and oppression.
MINORITY STRESS
Minority Stress Model

- Circumstances in the environment
- Disadvantaged status
- Minority identity

- General stressors
- Minority stress processes (distal)
- Minority stress processes (proximal)

- Coping and social support
- Health outcomes
- Characteristics of minority identity

(Adapted from Meyer, 2003)
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Characteristics of minority identity

(Adapted from Meyer, 2003)
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(Adapted from Meyer, 2003)
Minority Stress Model

Circumstances in the environment → General stressors → Coping and social support → Health outcomes

Disadvantaged status → Minority stress processes (distal) → Coping and social support → Health outcomes

Minority identity → Minority stress processes (proximal) → Health outcomes

Characteristics of minority identity

(Adapted from Meyer, 2003)
Minority Stress Model

Circumstances in the environment

Disadvantaged status

Minority identity

General stressors

Minority stress processes (distal)

Minority stress processes (proximal)

Characteristics of minority identity

Coping and social support

Health outcomes

(Adapted from Meyer, 2003)
Minority Stress Model

Circumstances in the environment → General stressors

Disadvantaged status → Minority stress processes (distal) → Minority stress processes (proximal) → Coping and social support → Health outcomes

Minority identity → Characteristics of minority identity

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- Disadvantaged status
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- Characteristics of minority identity
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- Minority stress processes (distal)
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- Health outcomes

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Minority Stress Model

Circumstances in the environment

Minority identity

Disadvantaged status

Minority stress processes (proximal)

Minority stress processes (distal)

Characteristics of minority identity

Health outcomes

Coping and social support

General stressors

(Adapted from Meyer, 2003)
Minority Stress Model

• Distal Stressors
  – Prejudice events
• Proximal Stressors

(Adapted from Meyer, 2003)
Minority Stress Model

- Distal Stressors
  - Prejudice events

- Proximal Stressors

(Adapted from Meyer, 2003)
Minority Stress Model

- Distal Stressors
  - Prejudice events
- Proximal Stressors
  - Expectations of rejection
  - Concealment

(Adapted from Meyer, 2003)
Minority Stress Model

- **Distal Stressors**
  - Prejudice events

- **Proximal Stressors**
  - Expectations of rejection
  - Concealment

(Adapted from Meyer, 2003)
Minority Stress Model

- Distal Stressors
  - Prejudice events
- Proximal Stressors
  - Expectations of rejection
  - Concealment
  - Internalized trans-negativity

(Adapted from Meyer, 2003)
Minority Stress Model

- Distal Stressors
  - Prejudice events
- Proximal Stressors
  - Expectations of rejection
  - Concealment
  - Internalized trans-negativity

(Adapted from Meyer, 2003)
Minority Stress Model

- **Distal Stressors**
  - Prejudice events

- **Proximal Stressors**
  - Expectations of rejection
  - Concealment
  - Internalized racism

(Adapted from Meyer, 2003)
Minority Stress Model

• Distal Stressors
  – Prejudice events
• Proximal Stressors
  – Expectations of rejection
  – Concealment
  – Internalized oppression

(Adapted from Meyer, 2003)
Minority Stress Model

- **Distal Stressors**
  - Prejudice events

- **Proximal Stressors**
  - Expectations of rejection
  - Concealment
  - Internalized oppression

(Potentially invisible
Potentially most damaging)

(Adapted from Meyer, 2003)
Minority Stress Model

Circumstances in the environment

Disadvantaged status

Minority identity

General stressors

Minority stress processes (distal)

Minority stress processes (proximal)

Characteristics of minority identity

Coping and social support

Health outcomes

(Adapted from Meyer, 2003)
Minority Stress Model

Circumstances in the environment

Disadvantaged status

Minority identity

General stressors

Minority stress processes (distal)

Minority stress processes (proximal)

Characteristics of minority identity

Coping and social support

Health outcomes

(Adapted from Meyer, 2003)
Minority Stress Model

- Circumstances in the environment
- Disadvantaged status
- Minority identity

- General stressors
- Minority stress processes (distal)
- Minority stress processes (proximal)

- Coping and social support
- Positive or negative impact
- Health outcomes

- Characteristics of minority identity

(Adapted from Meyer, 2003)
Minority Stress Model

Circumstances in the environment

Disadvantaged status

Minority identity

General stressors

Minority stress processes (distal)

Minority stress processes (proximal)

Characteristics of minority identity

Coping and social support

Health outcomes

(Adapted from Meyer, 2003)
Minority Stress Model

Circumstances in the environment

Disadvantaged status

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General stressors

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Minority stress processes (proximal)

Coping and social support

Health outcomes

Characteristics of minority identity

(Adapted from Meyer, 2003)
Minority Stress Model

• Characteristics of Minority Identity
  – Prominence: importance and visibility
  – Valence: capacity to make an impact
  – Integration: integral and included

(Adapted from Meyer, 2003)
Minority Stress Model

- Circumstances in the environment
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- General stressors
- Minority stress processes (distal)
- Minority stress processes (proximal)
- Characteristics of minority identity
- Coping and social support
- Health outcomes

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(Adapted from Meyer, 2003)
Minority Stress Theory

• Originally developed by Brooks based on research on minority stress and lesbian women in 1981
• Meyer further developed the theory in his 1995 article entitled *Minority stress and mental health in gay men*. 
Minority Stress Research

• Minority stress theory has applied to the health of transgender populations in a limited number of studies.
Minority Stress Research

• Minority stress theory has been applied to the health of people of color in a limited number of studies.
Minority Stress Research

- Minority stress theory has been applied to the health of LGBT people of color.
  - As with much LGBT research, this does not typically address the differences between sexual and gender minorities within the study results.
Minority Stress Research

- Minority stress theory has not been applied in research to describe health disparities for transgender and gender non-conforming people of color specifically.
Minority Stress Model

Circumstances in the environment → General stressors → Minority stress processes (distal) → Coping and social support → Health outcomes

Disadvantaged status → Minority stress processes (proximal) → Characteristics of minority identity

Minority identity

(Adapted from Meyer, 2003)
INTERSECTIONALITY
Flores, Brown, & Herman, 2016
Intersectionality

- Overlapping systems of oppression and the need for broader structural level changes to promote social justice and equity (Rosenthal, 2016)

- “As opposed to examining gender, race, class, and nation, as separate systems of oppression, intersectionality explores how these systems mutually construct one another…” (Hill-Collins, 1998).

- Social identities (e.g., race, sexuality, gender) and experiences of oppression are interdependent and mutually constitutive. (Bowleg, 2008).
Monolithic vs. Pluralistic Identities

- Race/Ethnic
- Gender
- Sexual Orientation
- Religion/Spirituality
- Age (child, adolescent, adult)
Monolithic vs. Pluralistic Identities

- Gender
- Race/Ethnic
- Sexual Orientation
- Religion/Spirituality
- Age (child, adolescent, adult)
- Veteran
- Employment
- Class
- SES
- Immigration Status
- Language
- Culture
- Parent
- Job Level
- National Origin

University of Minnesota
Driven to Discover™
Transphobia + Sexism ≠ Transphoria

- Racism
- Sexism
Laverne Cox’s Experience is not Unique but Yay! Resilience!

5 major themes for resiliency of trans youth of color navigating racism + transprejudice:

1. Evolving simultaneous self-definitions of gender and racial/ethnic identities
2. Being aware of adultism
3. Self-advocacy in educational systems
4. Finding one’s place in the LGBTQQQ youth community
5. Use of social media to affirm one’s identities as TYOC

Singh, 2013
Evolving Self-Definition:

“They [my family] had taught me to Chicano pride. Our people work hard. My mom and dad’s families took so many risks to be here so I could get an education. I felt proud-and feel proud- of being Chicano. Not being able to share with them who I was didn’t cut me off from that pride, so I just became proud to be Chicana. I’m a proud Chicana femme girl…”

“I used to use words like ‘genderqueer’ or ‘transgender’ only to describe myself. Today, I would say I am a “Black trans youth’…being Black and trans is more important to me than being genderqueer or Black. And that could change tomorrow.”

Singh, 2013, p 696-697
Trans POC’s Experiences with intersectional barriers to care

Adapted from Hill & Woodson, 2012; Hill et al., 2014
Institutional Cultural

Individual

Internalization of multiple oppressions

Lack of Competent Services; Insurance

Fear of Authority/Police; Mistrust of/Mistreatment by Health care providers

Traditional, Religious Values, Community Pride

Trans POC

Adapted from Hill & Woodson, 2012; Hill et al., 2014
Treatment Considerations

- Conceptualize affirmative care as a treatment approach
  - Appreciate complexity

- Acknowledge one’s own feelings, beliefs, biases, and values and how it impacts supportive treatment

(Edwards-Leeper, Leibowitz, & Sangganjanavanich, 2016)
Treatment Considerations

Major components of TGNC affirmative practice with TPOC:

– Awareness of own race/ethnicity and gender identity

– Addressing intersectional identities

– Challenging assumptions about TGNC experiences and the experiences of POC

– Building support and acknowledging differences within the therapeutic dyad

– Assessing client strengths and resilience in navigating multiple oppressions

– Providing a variety of resources

Chang & Singh, 2016


References


