

## HISPANIC AMERICANS AND THE MILITARY: MEASURING MICROAGGRESSION AND ITS MEDIATING EFFECTS ON ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE FACTORS

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### ABSTRACT

*This study was designed to examine the role of microaggression and how it may impact the performance of Hispanic Americans serving in the United States of America Armed Forces. Responses of 1,056 Hispanic Americans who were serving in active duty military units were evaluated using structural equation modeling. Findings indicated that organizational climate factors predict microaggression, leadership cohesion, workgroup cohesion, and workgroup effectiveness. Limitations, contributions, future research, and recommendations are discussed. Any opinions expressed in this study are those of the authors and should not be construed to represent the official position of DEOMI, the military services, or the Department of Defense.*

**Keywords:** Military, United States Armed Forces, MicroagGression, MicroagGressions, Diversity.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

America certainly has made significant progress in the way that it interacts and extends dignity and respect to its minority population. Overt racist behavior is illegal, and for the most part, unwelcome in every corridor of American life. However, some diversity scholars (Constantine, 2007; Sue & Constantine, 2007; Sue et al., 2007), in their quest to eradicate all forms of racism, remain increasingly concerned about those subtle but substantial verbal and nonverbal acts of racial aggression known as racial microaggressions.

Sue and colleagues define racial microaggressions as those "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group" (Sue et al., 2007, p. 273). The target person or group perceives these behaviors as put-downs or negative behaviors that question their legitimacy.

Despite the deleterious effect that microaggressions can have on organizational members to include loss of self-esteem, mistrust, impairment of workplace productivity, increased levels of anger and a detrimental impact on the psyche of the target person or group (Pierce, 1995; Sue, 2005; Sue et al., 2007), only one study has attempted to measure this construct. Constantine (2007) developed a 10-item measure to assess microaggressions and their role in the client-psychologist relationship. Constantine found that clients who experienced microaggressions have a weaker therapeutic alliance with their psychologist and consequently reported lower counseling satisfaction.

A review of the literature indicates that a measure to assess microaggression in organizations apparently does not exist. Therefore, one goal of this research is to develop a reliable instrument to evaluate microaggressions in organizations, specifically in military units. Using the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute's (DEOMI) Organizational Climate Survey (DEOCS) and a sample of its respondents, another goal of this research is to examine the relationship between organizational climate factors and microaggression in military units. The study also attempts to determine the antecedents of leadership cohesion, microaggression, unit cohesion, and unit effectiveness in the military. Finally, we investigate whether microaggression mediates the relationship between climate factors and military readiness indicators.