

Research and Analysis of the Slang Term “Homie”

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Abstract

A survey was constructed in order to gain a definite understanding of the slang term, “homie.” This questionnaire consisted of nine open-ended questions that were followed by four questions to reveal necessary information about my respondents including when and where they took the survey. This survey was given to 10 female and male students that attended Oakland University during the winter semester of 2012. Following the survey, significant findings were produced that revealed that the term, “homie,” was a word used by individuals to express friendship between two people. Furthermore, “homie” was found to be a word people associated with a positive connotation that individuals used as a noun to describe their friends.

Keywords: Homie, Slang

Background

Living in a society of vast innovation, creative style, and redefined individuality comes with a language used today that is like none other. Words are constantly developing new meanings that have truly revolutionized a new era of slang. This so called “slang language” allows an individual of any origin to express who they are, where they came from, and most importantly what they stand for. Today, the word “homie” is a slang term that has evolved throughout the decades and with it, different meanings amongst a wide variety of people. According to *the Oxford English Dictionary* (OED), the term “homie” is defined as “an immigrant to New Zealand, from Britain.” As one can see, the roots of the term have stemmed off into what has become a word used most commonly amongst a younger generation of people. The *OED* also provides a second definition for “homie” which is much more suitable for its slang usage. This definition is; “A person from one's home town or neighborhood; a member of one's peer group or gang; a homeboy or homegirl.”

However, in order to achieve a true understanding of a slang term one must sift through several sources that present different perspectives on the word. Therefore, the *Urban Dictionary* can help present a more modern meaning of “homie.” The *Urban Dictionary* defines homie as: “shortened version of homeboy, homeboy being a close friend.” Having a very similar definition as the OED, one is able to see how the term “homie” that was used in the past, has evolved into the word that is used by individuals today.

As a third and final source for a definition, the *Online Slang Dictionary* can really help solidify how the term “homie” is truly used today. The *Online Slang Dictionary* simply writes: “a good friend.” This final definition vividly shows that “homie” has evolved into a word with a positive connotation as it is associated with close bonds such as friendship or brotherhood.

Furthermore, through a precise set of questionnaires that were passed out to 20 students both male and female, a study was conducted to determine how the slang term “homie” is most commonly used and interpreted in today’s society.

Methods

Entering into a field of research that requires giving surveys and collecting data always presents a unique challenge. Therefore, I decided to use a term that I myself was familiar with and could relate too. Using slang consistently throughout my everyday life, I knew I wanted to choose a term that I found myself using on a regular basis amongst my peers and more specifically my friends. Eventually, I selected “homie” because I knew it was a term that had an interesting history and a strong meaning with my generation today.

In order to gain a better understanding of what “homie” means to different individuals and how it is most frequently used in the present day, a survey was given to 20 Oakland University students throughout a three day period in February. This period began on Wednesday, February 2nd and ended on Friday, February 5th. Throughout these days the surveys were approximately given out during the time frame of 11-2 p.m. The survey consisted of nine open-ended questions and 4 direct questions to define gender, time, place, and location. 10 males and 10 females answered the survey in order to provide a broad span of evidence. Having prior knowledge that “homie” is most often used amongst ages 18-25, I decided to give the survey to only college students knowing that these were the individuals who were most familiar with the term. This group of people would help provide precise data in several crucial areas.

I would go on to sort my data through a strict manner of organization while looking for patterns or recurring themes. The questionnaires would be sorted by means of gender and age. First I would create two stacks of questionnaires with ten correspondents that were separated into

a male and female section. This would inevitably give me both the male and female outlook on what “homie” really meant to them. After I analyzed the data that was sorted by means of gender, I would then group my evidence by means of age. Since my surveys were only taken by college students, I split the surveys up into two piles, one for ages 18-21, and the other for ages 22 and up. Through this matter of organization, I would be able to analyze how different ages used the term while determining what it meant to them. Ultimately, this would lead to crucial data comparison that really provided me with great evidence. These comparisons would also help me find patterns that were present throughout the surveys. Through this variation of sorting, concise patterns were found relative to the term “homie” which ultimately produced key evidence to be used for my analysis.

Data

The first question of the survey would read as follows; define the term “homie” in no more than one sentence. This question would set the tone for the questionnaire while giving the respondents an opportunity to sum up their interpretation of “homie.” Overwhelmingly, 16 out of the 20 surveys associated “homie” with an individual who was considered to be a close friend. One respondent defined “homie” as, “someone who is very close to you.” This response represents the majority of answers for question one and also supports both *the Urban Dictionary’s* and *the Online Slang Dictionary’s* definition of the term. On the opposite end of the spectrum, the other four respondents considered “homie” to be simply an individual who is in a gang. One individual writes; “a boy or man in a gang that wear’s their pants hanging down.”

Question two was used in order to provide a synonym for the word “homie.” Through this question, words such as “bro,” “dog,” and “friend” were all popular terms that were produced throughout 10 respondent’s answers. The remaining surveys contained synonyms such

as “gangsta.” Generally, question two helped provide words that would reinforce the majority’s interpretation of the word “homie.”

The next question of the survey would ask for the respondents to provide an antonym of “homie.” From this question, 14 individuals gave a word that was associated with a negative connotation. For example, words such as “hater,” “loser,” and “bitch” were all given. This question provided crucial information that the opposite of “homie” was overwhelmingly considered to be negative. On a separate note, these 14 individuals were an exact split of male and female.

Question four took the survey in a different direction and asked the participants to use “homie” in a sentence. Interestingly enough, 10 of the respondents provided the sentence, “Hey homie whatsup” (or a variation of it). It can be drawn from these sentences that “homie” is often used in greetings and as a noun. This question helped provide evidence as to how “homie” is used in people’s day to day conversations.

Question five helps push this idea further as I asked the participants if they ever used the term “homie,” and if so, when and why? This question would help determine how individuals today use the word “homie.” The answers provided help gather clues as to whether or not “homie” would be associated with an individual who was considered to be a friend or rather someone the participant was unfamiliar with. Only 6 out of the 20 students asked had never used the word and each of those six individuals happened to be a female. Of the remaining 14 correspondents, nine males admitted to have used the word in the past with only one claiming to have never used the term.

The next question would build off the previous one and would ask the participants if they have actually ever been called a “homie” and if so in what circumstances? 16 individuals

responded to have being called “homie” and of those several had noted it was by a friend. One individual writes, “Yeah, my friends call me homie sometimes.”

Question seven builds off of question six and asks, “Have you ever called yourself ‘homie,’ and if so, describe in what circumstances.” Ironically, although majority of the respondents had actually used the term, 18 out of the 20 individuals had never actually called themselves a “homie.” In fact, the only 2 respondents who wrote yes were rather unsure; writing, “Yes, probably.” The other 18 directly stated “No” in their answers.

Question eight asks whether or not the respondents believed “homie” had either a positive or negative connotation. This question seemed to create a variety of answers as mixed data was produced. Several students had simply said that the term emphasized neither a negative nor positive meaning. When responding, one individual wrote, “Neither, it’s a pretty neutral term.” While others expressed that it was a compliment if and only if it was used by a close friend.

On a final note, question nine would ask what age group was thought to use the word “homie.” This question would help me determine who the students believed were most susceptible to using the word. Overwhelmingly, the age group that had been selected was roughly between the ages of 18-25. This helped demonstrate that “homie” was more often used amongst the younger generation even though it’s a popular slang term amongst the masses.

Analysis

From these precise questions several pieces of evidence have produced multiple patterns that can give a greater idea on the meaning of the word on a broader scale. First off, that “homie” was used as a noun in every survey, and that it’s a term that is used to express friendship amongst two individuals. Whether these two people may be close or simply acquainted, it can be

noted that “homie” is a term used to implicate a bond. With this bond, comes a rather positive connotation that is most frequently used amongst individuals between the ages of 18-25.

However, an individual does not use this word to describe his or herself. One reason that these consistent responses were produced could be attributed to the fact that the survey was given to only college students. This generation is one that is always changing our culture while at the same time tweaking our language with words that pertain to specific meanings.

When comparing the differences between genders, the questionnaires provided several crucial pieces of evidence that can be directly tied to important claims. Most importantly, males use the term “homie” much more frequently than females. In fact, of the 10 males that were surveyed, only one had admitted to never use the term “homie” before. On the other hand, six females revealed that they had never used the term before. Therefore, only four of the 10 females surveyed had actually used the term in their usual conversations. It can also be noted that although only 10 females were surveyed, four out of 10 is still less than half. With this in mind, the claim can be made that men certainly use “homie” more frequently than females. One reason this may be the case is because when it was asked to provide a synonym for “homie,” several male respondents provided the term “bro.” Moreover, “bro” (shortened form of “brother”, which is male) is also another term that means “friend” and is most certainly a word that is used overwhelmingly more by males in comparison to females. Even though four females had noted they had previously used the word, it seems as though these correspondents only used the word in a rather sarcastic context. Almost as if they were using the term to describe their friends as “gangster.” However, females also use “homie” the same way as males, which is to demonstrate friendship or familiarity with another individual. From this evidence, it can be said that “homie” is more frequently used by males in comparison to females.

When separating the data into two separate age groups, it seemed that no distinct connections could be made simply because the age gap may have been too close to one another. Had an older group been surveyed, different responses would have been more likely produced. Overall, my group of surveyors believed “homie” was a word that was used to establish friendship. This claim can be supported by question one and two as a connection was created as those who defined “homie” with being a close friend would also use synonyms that were closely related to friendship.

Through this evidence and analysis it can be seen that the evidence I have acquired can also be connected to several points made by the *OED*. The one major connection that stands out is that the evidence collected supports specific points in the *OED*'s definition of “homie.” More specifically, when the *OED* writes; “a member of one’s peer group or gang.” The *OED* is insinuating that “homie” expresses a friend that is apart of one’s social group or network. Connecting this with my data, it was found that 16 out of 20 of my correspondents also agreed that “homie” inferred a friendship or relationship between two individuals. However, the *OED* also notes that “homie” is a slang term mostly used by African-Americans. Although it was noted by the *OED* that “homie” was a word to label an immigrant to New Zealand, from Great Britain, a distinct connection can’t notably be made between this origin and that of the African American origin of the word. In fact, most etymologists trace the origin of the term to late 19th century America. During this era, large masses of African Americans were moving into larger cities, and the term “homie,” stemmed from “homeboy,” which at that time had the meaning of a male friend from back home.

Connecting this information to my survey, my data suggests that “homie” is also a term commonly used amongst white individuals. Since all my respondents were white, this claim can

be heavily supported as 14 out of the 20 surveyed had admitted to using the slang term. This could potentially be due to the fact that the word today is spreading into a more universal term that although in the past has exemplified “gangsters,” it has now evolved into a word that simply expresses friendship. With these connections in general, it can be noted that slang and more specifically words such as “homie” are constantly evolving by those who are surrounded by these terms in their everyday lives. Variables such as age, sex, and time era are all vital factors that determine what direction a word may take in its future.

Conclusion

Through this concise data several conclusions can be made about our culture as a whole. On a broader scale, it can be seen that the definitions given by the respondents are almost nearly identical to those given by the *Urban Dictionary* and the *Online Slang Dictionary*. It can also be noted that males use “homie” on a much more frequent basis than females. Males use the term “homie” as a noun for a close friend or sometimes even a stranger. Also, those who are most familiar with the term are within the age group of 18-25. Through concise patterns that the surveys have produced, one can see how the term “homie” is used by a younger generation to express a close friendship amongst two individuals.

Appendix

My name is -----, and I am gathering information for a WRT 160 course project. My professor, Dr. Amanda Laudig, would like us to ask people to fill out questionnaires for us so that we might learn how to gather and analyze data. I would appreciate your taking a few minutes to fill out my questionnaire. Your responses will be completely anonymous and will be employed only in the project that I write for the class. Thank you for your time.

1. Define the term “Homie” in no more than one sentence.
2. Give at least one term that means the same as “Homie.”
3. Give at least one term that means the opposite of “Homie.”
4. Use the term “Homie” (or some variation of it) in a sentence.
5. Have you ever used this term? If so, briefly describe when and why.
6. Have you ever been called “Homie?” If so, briefly describe when and why.
7. Have you ever called yourself “Homie?” If so, briefly describe when and why.
8. If someone were to call you “Homie,” would you think it was an insult or a compliment? Explain.
9. What age Group usually used the Word “homie?”

Gender M F

Age

When questionnaire answered

Where questionnaire answered

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