

University of Missouri – St. Louis

The Graduate School
Announcement

An oral examination in defense of the dissertation for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy in Clinical Psychology with an emphasis in Clinical-Community Psychology

Ashley Gold Parker

M.A., Clinical Psychology, University of Missouri – St. Louis, 2013
B.A., Psychology and Anthropology, Washington University in St. Louis, 2009

Exploring Whites' Recognition of Racial Microaggressions Through an Existential Lens

Date: Friday, March 10, 2017
Time: 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.
Place: 339 Stadler Hall

Abstract

Substantive evidence demonstrates that targets of racial discrimination (i.e., people of color) are acutely aware of racial microaggressions when they occur. Far less research has explored the interpretive experiences of perpetrators and bystanders of race-related prejudice and discrimination, individuals who are typically White. The current study sought to identify personal and situational factors that affect Whites' recognition – or lack thereof – of racial microaggressions. The sample consisted of self-identified exclusively White/Caucasian adults ($N=210$) who completed questionnaires exploring Belief in a Just World (BJW), Social Dominance Orientation (SDO), and three facets of Ethnocultural Empathy (Awareness, Perspective-Taking, and Empathic Action). Participants were randomly assigned to receive one of two primes (a) mortality salience or (b) neutral, and were then presented with vignettes to evaluate. It was hypothesized that participants who experienced mortality salience prior to judging racially microaggressive vignettes would be less likely to identify the vignettes as microaggressive. Analyses revealed that there were no significant differences between the mortality salience group and control group on their recognition of racial microaggressions. However, BJW, SDO, Awareness, Perspective-Taking, and Empathic Action each independently predicted Whites' recognition of racial microaggressions. Among these five independent variables, Awareness (awareness of contemporary racism and privilege) emerged as the predominant predictive variable in an all-inclusive model. Future directions include replication of these findings and refining a measure of microaggression recognition.

Defense of Dissertation Committee

Matthew Taylor, Ph.D. (Chair)
Emily Gerstein, Ph.D.
Susan Kashubeck-West, Ph.D.
Sha-Lai Williams, Ph.D.