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This Is America: Examining the Influence of White Privilege and the Propensity to Make Attributions to Prejudice on the Acceptability of Racial Microaggressions

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AND THE PROPENSITY TO MAKEATTRIBUTIONS TO PREJUDICE

ONTHEACCEPTABILITY OF RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

A Thesis Presented to the Graduate Faculty

of the Fort Hays State University in

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

the Degree of Master of Science

by

Jordan Ashley Sparrow-Antonio

B.S., Fort Hays State University

Date March 16, 2020

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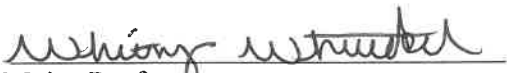
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ABSTRACT

The current study investigated the relationship between White privilege (WP) awareness and the acceptability of racial microaggressions among majority group members. Based on prior research, three potential mediators (i.e., the willingness to confront WP), the anticipated costs of addressing WP, and WP remorse) and one moderator (i.e., one's propensity to make attributions to prejudice; PMAPS) were examined. A total of 202 participants were recruited from Amazon's Mechanical Turk. Efforts were made to recruit participants from each of the five regions of the United States (Midwest = 24.1%, Northeast = 24.6%, Southeast = 17.8%, Southwest = 14.1%, West = 19.4%) to reduce any potential sampling bias. An almost equal number of men (N =104) and women (N = 85) who identified as Caucasian completed the study. All participants were over the age of 18 and under the age of 65, with an average age of 36.76 (*SD* = 16.51). Participants completed the *White Privilege Attitudes Scale* (see Appendix E), the *Propensity to Make Attributions to Prejudice Scale* (see Appendix F), the *Acceptability of Racial Microaggressions Scale* (see Appendix D), and the *Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale* (see Appendix G).

Results suggest that WP awareness was negatively predictive of the acceptability of racial microaggressions among majority group members [$t(189)$ = -9.26, p < .001; β = -.56]. The costs associated with WP, the willingness to confront WP, and WP remorse were not found to be significant mediators. However, the PMAPS was a significant moderator [β = -.17; t (189) = -2.804, p < .001]. This effect appeared to be the strongest when both WP awareness and PMAPS were high (t = -5.83) compared to low (t = -3.18). Overall, results from this study help to explain why and when majority group individuals might find racial microaggressions acceptable. This research may subsequently help to inform future research as well as potential programming

designed to decrease the prevalence of racial microaggressions with individual differences in mind.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to take a moment to thank the members of my committee for taking time out of their schedules to lend their knowledge and experience to this project. Their input was invaluable throughout this process. Above and beyond, I would like to thank my advisor and mentor, Dr. Whitney Whitaker. Her steadfast support, encouragement, and patience throughout the writing process. I will never be able to express my appreciation and gratitude.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF APPENDICES

INTRODUCTION

Racial prejudice and discrimination are pervasive societal issues in the United States and can have serious negative implications for a variety of individuals (Oswald, Mitchell, Blanton, Jaccard, & Tetlock, 2013). Many examples of the pervasive nature of prejudice and discrimination can be found in today's popular culture. For instance, in early 2018, the rap artist Childish Gambino released his song *This is America*, which highlighted racial disparities and discriminatory behaviors that seem to be engrained in American culture. Primarily, the song describes racism, discrimination, and violence perpetrated by police and other entities that African Americans experience throughout their lives. This song (and associated music video) not only highlight that prejudice and discrimination remain widespread in the United States, but also suggests that racist attitudes and behaviors appear to be accepted as group or social norms in United States society. The Childish Gambino is not the first artist to acknowledge these important societal issues relevant to prejudice and discrimination in the United States. In 2014, Ryan Macklemore publicly apologized to artist Kendrick Lamar after winning the best new artist Grammy. Macklemore claimed that Lamar, a Black man, had been robbed of recognition due to his race. Macklemore also publicly acknowledge how his status as a White man had given him unearned advantages in the music industry (Conway, Lipsey, Pogge, & Ratliff, 2017). This act on behalf of Macklemore calls attention to factors and systems in place that contribute to racist attitudes and behaviors.

Importantly, empirical evidence focusing on the impact of prejudice and discrimination has been on the rise over the past three decades; however, more research is needed to better understand and manage this phenomenon. The current study primarily focused on factors that might contribute to and explain the acceptability of prejudice and discrimination in the United

States. Prior research and theory will be discussed below in detail regarding the evolution of

prejudice and discrimination as well as variables that might influence its acceptability. Overall,

this prior research will help to inform and guide the goals and expected outcomes of the current

study.

Prior Research and Theory: Evolution of Prejudice and Discrimination

Research commonly defines prejudice as a negative evaluation of an individual or a

group of individuals on the sole basis of their group membership (Crandall, Eshleman &

O'Brian, 2002). These negative evaluations towards others are often based on inaccurate

information rooted in stereotypes (i.e., generalized beliefs about others, namely due to group

membership/affiliation) developed through generations. As negative evaluations of another

develop, a certain attitude or affect also emerges that might form the basis of prejudice; as such,

it is common to see prejudice cited in prior research as more of an attitude or evaluation of others

that can be biased (Saucier, Miller, & Doucet, 2005). For example, possessing an attitude(s) that

individuals who live in a particular part of town are dangerous or untrustworthy due to a few

cases of crime in the area, could lead to the formation of a stereotype (that serves to solidify a

prejudiced attitude) that all individuals who live in that part of town are dangerous criminals.

In comparison, racial discrimination refers more to the behavioral component of racism.

This includes a majority racial group member's actions that have negative effects on minority

racial-ethnic individuals (Williams, Neighbors, & Jackson, 2003). Discrimination can manifest in

a variety of ways; a major category, important for the current study, focuses on the formation of

negative attitudes (i.e., prejudice) and subsequent behaviors (i.e., discrimination) that White

individuals display towards minority group members. Importantly, previous research suggests

that holding a prejudicial attitude may potentially lead to acts of discrimination (Crandall et al., 2002).

Given that prejudicial attitudes can subsequently lead to discriminatory behaviors, current research has focused on the nature of prejudice and discrimination changing as a function of our society (Sue, Capodilupo, & Holder, 2008). Blatant racist attitudes that were seen acceptable decades ago (i.e., viewing minority members as second-class citizens) and the accompanying behaviors (i.e., segregated schools) have now become less acceptable to our society as a whole. In other words, blatant and overt expressions of prejudice and discrimination have become less acceptable in United States' society due to their outward displays of aggression and unfairness towards minority groups. However, this research suggests that the decrease in social acceptability of blatant racist acts does not mean that prejudice and discrimination are not present currently in society. Rather, expressions have evolved, the same way that societal expectations and norms have evolved over time.

Overt prejudice and discrimination have been deeply rooted parts of United States' society for generations. The Jim Crow caste system rose immediately after the abolition of slavery in 1877, and effectively categorized minority groups as second-class citizens until the rise of Affirmative Action in the mid 1960's (Alexander, 2012). Throughout this time period the segregation of schools, housing and workforces, along with extreme pay gaps were a common practice throughout the country. In more extreme cases, involving the Ku Klux Klan, mob violence, bombings, and public lynching's of racial minorities were common examples of overt discrimination and racism. These overt, outward forms of prejudice and discrimination continued to dominate society as favorable acts until the first Affirmative Action law was introduced by President John F. Kennedy in 1963 (Alexander, 2012). Affirmative Action set in motion what

later became known as the Civil Rights Movement, which began to recognize racial minorities as more than second class citizens. This led to the desegregation of communities, the right to vote, equal chances for employment opportunities, among other inclusive acts. Soon, overt acts of prejudice and discrimination became less favorable in the eyes of society.

Relevant to this societal shift, Sheirf and Sheirf's (1953) Group Norm Theory suggests that attitudes, values, beliefs and prejudices are all acquired as part of the socialization process. Thus, the development of prejudice-related norms (i.e., segregation and/or lynching) occur within social groups. These prejudice-related norms pressure individuals to conform to overall group norms. When prejudices are viewed as norms within society, individuals are more likely to develop and share the same prejudices (Crandall et al., 2002). Overt forms of racism were viewed as the overall group or societal norm in the United States until the rise of Affirmative Action. This new push of inclusivity changed the overall societal norms and made overt acts of prejudice and discrimination unfavorable. However, the shift in social norms did not eliminate prejudice or discrimination, but merely changed how it was expressed (Poteat & Spainerman, 2012). As such, researchers use the term *modern racism* now to describe the evolved expressions of prejudice and discrimination.

Modern racism involves more subtle expressions of discrimination when compared to the "old-fashioned" racism of the past (McConohay, 1986). In general, this subtle form of discrimination is still intended to belittle, offend, and/or discriminate against minority groups (McConohay, 1986). For example, expressing to a minority individual that they insert themselves in places that they should not be (i.e., leaders of organizations; positions of power) with the intent to insult the abilities of the individual can be considered a form of modern racism. Although in general modern racism is still considered to be intentional, more recent research has

begun to examine non-intentional forms of modern racism. More specifically, any statement or act that might not be intended to offend and/or be derogatory (and in some cases may be viewed as a compliment or praise by the perpetrator) but still communicates and upholds aspects of prejudice and discrimination (Pfeifer & Bernstein, 2003; Tarman & Sears, 2005).

With the evolution of prejudice and discrimination in mind, as well as the detrimental impact of these attitudes and behaviors, the main purpose of the current study is to expand on prior research to further explore forms of modern racism. More recent research (within the last decade) cites racial microaggressions as a form of modern racism (Sue et al., 2007); however, in comparison to modern racism, limited empirical research has explored the usage and acceptability of microaggressions. In addition, research investigating factors that might predict the usage of racial microaggressions is limited. The current study seeks to fill a gap in prior research by assessing the acceptability of racial microaggressions as well as factors, such as White privilege and the propensity to make attributions to prejudice that might enhance our understanding of when and why microaggressions are used. To better understand the theoretical underpinnings of the current study, research regarding microaggressions, White privilege, and the propensity to make attributions to prejudice will be reviewed.

Microaggressions: Relevant Research and Findings

Microaggressions are considered a form of modern racism and include subtle, stunning and often automatic "put-downs." Racial microaggressions tend to be verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities (intentional or unintentional) that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights or insults towards people of color (Sue et al., 2007). For instance, a White individual who says to a minority group member "you're a credit to your race" may not be intended to communicate a derogatory message and may be perceived by the perpetrator as a

genuine compliment, however, the underlying meaning of this statement conveys a message that

the minority member is not as intelligent as a majority group member. Further, a statement such

as, "I'm not racist, I have several black friends" may not be intended to be offensive but does in

fact communicate the message that a majority group member is immune to racism because this

person has friends of color. These two examples help to highlight the potential for racist and

discriminatory statements/acts to be unintentionally harmful. Although just two examples,

previous literature has found three main types of micro-aggressive statements and behaviors,

categorizing them based on the intensity and intent behind the statement. These types include

microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations.

       Types of microaggressions. Microassaults are similar to "old fashioned" or overt racism,

or comments/attitudes that are intended to harm another individual. Microassaults tend to be

expressed in a private or "micro" situation, where individuals are able to maintain a level of

anonymity or safety. Since group norms now dictate these more overt expressions are no longer

acceptable attitudes/ feelings, a level of anonymity allows individuals to express these

microassaults without fear of repercussions. This type of microaggression is primarily

characterized by varying degrees of conscious and deliberate verbal or nonverbal attacks with the

intent to harm the victim[1] (Sue et al., 2007). Referring to and individual as "Oriental," and

discouraging interracial interactions are common examples of microassaults. Though this type of

microaggression is most likely to be a conscious statement, they are generally not expressed in a

public capacity.

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[1] It is important to note that the term "victim" in this context has the potential to prime unintended negative mindsets
and/or connotations. However, "victim" was selected (and retained for consistency purposes) based on a large body
of prior prejudice and discrimination literature that utilizes this terminology.

Microinsults are characterized by statements that demean an individual's racial heritage or identity and are expressed by subtle snubs that are frequently unknown to the perpetrator (Sue et al., 2007). These can be conveyed in both a verbal and nonverbal manner, depending on the context of the situation. Microinsults may not be meant as an aggression towards minority groups but the context in which they occur are important. For instance, these forms of microaggressions may occur in situations where a White individual asks an employee of color how they got their job, or when a White teacher favors a White student over a minority student based solely on race/ethnicity. Although these are not outward displays of aggression, the hidden messages communicate that minority groups are less qualified, and their contributions are unimportant. Microinvalidations exclude or reject the psychological thoughts, feelings, and/or experiences of a person of color (Sue et al., 2007).

Microinvalidations tend to be unconscious in nature and could potentially be seen as a genuine compliment by the perpetrator. When a White individual compliment's a minority individual on their ability to speak English, even though they were born and raised in the United States, the perpetrator may be genuine in their compliment but are suggesting that the minority member is a perpetual foreigner. Similarly, when a White individual says, "there is only one race, the human race," this person is negating racial and cultural experiences of minority members. The examples above indicate the differing levels of intensity and intent that each type of microaggression expresses when it is being communicated to a minority individual. While it is important to recognize these differences, the overall impact of the different types of microaggressions on minority member's well-being is relatively similar.

Impact of microaggressions. Previous literature has focused on how the experience of microaggressions can have detrimental effects, such as decreased self-esteem as well as

increased stress, depression, and anxiety among minority groups (Wong-Padoongpatt, Zane, Okazaki, & Saw, 2017). In a 2017 study, researchers explored Asian American's experiences with racial microaggressions and how these experiences relate to both individual and collective self-esteem (Thai, Lyons, Lee, & Iwasaki, 2017). A significant negative relationship was found between the experiences of microaggressions and psychological well-being. Participants who reported experiencing more microaggressions in their daily lives reported lower levels of individual and collective self-esteem. In a similar study, Torres and Taknint (2015) examined how ethnic microaggressions impacted depression and stress in Latino individuals. Comparable to the previously mentioned study, individuals who experienced more microaggressions in their lives reported significantly higher levels of traumatic stress symptoms; which in turn were shown to be predictive of depression. A significant portion of the current literature has focused on how individuals experience microaggressions in a more generalized setting (Alvarez & Juang, 2010; Murphy-Shigematsu, 2010). This could include situations such as interactions in the grocery store or in a classroom setting. However, there are many professional settings in which microaggressions occur that could lead to more serious implications than just experiencing them in day-to-day life.

Hook and colleagues (2016) examined the occurrence of racial/ ethnic microaggressions in counseling sessions, and whether or not they contribute to poor counseling outcomes in racial/ ethnic minorities. A diverse sample of minority individuals (*N*= 2,212) were surveyed about their experiences with microaggressions within their counseling sessions (including frequency and impact). Researchers found the majority of clients (81%) reported experiencing at least one racial microaggression during their time in counseling. Clients reported experiencing microaggressions that centered around the lack of knowledge or awareness of bias and stereotypes regarding the

minority groups. Individuals also reported that therapists engaged in microaggressions by avoiding discussion around cultural differences, primarily when therapists were not the same race as the client. This study, along with the majority of the prior research that has been conducted, has focused on how these microaggressions impact and are perceived by minority groups (Sue et al., 2008; Wong-Padoongpatt et al., 2017). However, there is little research in comparison examining majority group members' perspectives regarding microaggressions; specifically, a limitation seems to exist in the literature regarding how majority group members view microaggressions and if these individuals understand and accept the messages that microaggressions communicate. Further, factors that might explain acceptability of microaggressions among majority group members is lacking.

Usage of microaggressions. While it is incredibly important to research and understand how minority individuals experience microaggressions and how microaggressions impact the overall functioning of minority individuals, there are very few studies that focus on how majority groups (White individuals) might understand their biases, how they might use microaggressions, and why they find these expressions to be acceptable. In a 2016 study, Mekawi, Bresin, and Hunter assessed whether White participants' fear of racial/ ethnic minorities was associated with racial shooting bias and if dehumanization moderated this effect. Participants were asked to complete a dehumanization implicit association test and a simulated shooting task (a computer program that allowed participants to respond to a potential shooter situation), then reported their fear of racial minorities. Results indicated that individuals who reported high levels of White fear had a lower threshold for the shooting of Black targets relative to White and East Asian targets. In other words, individuals who reported higher levels of fear towards racial/ethnic minorities were more likely to display a shooting bias (and shoot the target) towards Black targets

compared to targets that were White. Also, individuals who were high in White fear and high in

dehumanization were significantly more liberal in their shooting thresholds for Black targets

compared to White targets. When individuals fear racial/ethnic minorities and deny certain

aspects of humanity to an out-group (e.g., equating members of the out-group to animals or

objects), participants were more likely to shoot Black targets compared to other racial groups

(Mekawi et al., 2017). While this study examines how the implicit biases that majority

individuals may hold can potentially have devastating consequences, it is only a starting point for

research on how majority groups understand and accept prejudices and subsequent

discriminatory behaviors.

Mekawi and Todd (2018) expanded on the narrow literature focusing on the viewpoint of

majority group members; they developed and validated a scale to measure attitudes about how

acceptable it is for majority individuals to use microaggressions directed towards racial and

ethnic minorities in interpersonal interactions. The *Acceptability of Racial Microaggressions*

Scale (the ARMS, see Appendix D) is a 34-item scale with four distinct factors, including victim

blaming, exoticizing, power evasion, and color evasion. These factors are differentially

associated with prejudice and ideological social attitudes and can potentially identify patterns of

acceptability. The victim blaming factor includes microaggressions that denigrate and blame

racial and ethnic minority cultures for racial disparities. For example, this might constitute an

individual making the statement that there will not be racial progress until racial minorities stop

relying on handouts from the government. The exoticizing factor includes microaggressions that

romanticize, sexualize, and glamorize the bodies of racial and ethnic minorities. These could

include statements like, "Native Americans are so fierce" or "you're so beautiful, you're like a

geisha." Power evasion encompasses microaggressions that deny the role of racism in racial

disparities. Examples include: "everyone is treated the same by the legal system" and "everyone has access to the same educational opportunities, regardless of race or ethnicity." The final factor represents color evasion or minimizing or denying race. For example, this might include statements like, "there is only one race, the human race" or "even if we look different, we are basically the same." Important for the current study, this was the first scale to combine several different aspects that are frequently discussed in microaggression research (i.e., modern racism, color-blindness, and social dominance orientation) and develop a set of questions to assess how acceptable individuals believe it would be for a White individual to use these statements and behaviors among a racially diverse group.

To further validate the ARMS (see Appendix D), researchers administered the scale to participants, as well as asked how likely they would be to openly disagree with someone saying such statements (Mekawi & Todd, 2018). Results showed that the more individuals believed that the statements were acceptable, the more they believed they would use the microaggressions in the future. Similarly, the more participants found the statements to be unacceptable, they reported being more willing to openly disagree with the perpetrator. However, the association was the lowest for the power evasion factor. Thus, even though participants believed statements that deny the role of racism in legal disparities were unacceptable, they were less likely to openly disagree with a perpetrator on these statements. While this scale measures the acceptability of saying microaggressions rather than actual commission, it is one of the first to address the lack of research focusing on perspective of majority group members regarding microaggressions.

With prior research examining microaggressions from the perspective of both a victim and perpetrator in mind, the current study seeks to fill gaps in prior literature through a focus on perpetrators. More specifically, expanding on prior research to examine why majority group

members might use and find microaggressions acceptable along with identifying if any other

factors could potentially influence this acceptability. One such factor that could influence

acceptability of racial microaggressions is an individual's White privilege. In addition, an

individuals' propensity to make attributions to prejudice may serve as a factor that can explain

perceptions of racial microaggression acceptability among majority group members.

Factors Influencing the Acceptability of Microaggressions

　　　　White privilege. Previous research has defined White privilege (WP) as unearned

advantages of being White in a racially stratified society (such as the United States) and is

characterized as an expression of institutional power that is largely unacknowledged by most

White individuals (Pinterits, Poteat, & Spainerman, 2009). McIntosh (1988) suggests that White

individuals are carefully taught not to recognize their WP and therefore much of the oppression

that comes from WP is actually unconscious. Potential advantages of WP could include having a

lower chance to be the victims of police brutality or random drug stops, better access to

healthcare, and have a greater chance of being hired for a position based solely on the color of

their skin (Conway et al., 2017). Many of these advantages are easily taken for granted or are not

always recognized by White individuals because they may have never been in a situation that has

challenged their place in society. As such, examples like Ryan Macklemore's attempt to note his

White privilege and unearned advantages in the music industry might be rare.

　　　　It is important to note that many of these privileges are inherent due to the long history of

White power in the United States, stemming from the racial caste system that was dominant in

the early United States (Liu, 2017). Similar to how prejudice and discrimination are learned and

shared by the socialization process, WP has been transferred in the same fashion and might be

explained by the same Group Norm Theory (Sheirf & Sheirf, 1953). Based on this theory, values

and beliefs surrounding WP are dictated by an individual's social group. Liu (2017) suggests that most individuals do not acknowledge they have the privileges in which they do because the privileges (e.g., social class and/or favorable treatment by law enforcement) have been passed down through the generations without being challenged by society as a whole. In the past several decades, the concept of WP has received an increase in conceptual and empirical attention, however, important to the current study, attitudes associated with WP remain understudied (Conway et al., 2017).

Due to the long history of majority individuals being unaware of their WP, there is a wide range of potential attitudes/reactions that White individuals might express in response to their privilege. Pinterits et al. (2009) suggested that there are three distinct dimensions that are associated with the attitudes surrounding WP, the affective dimension, the cognitive dimension, and the behavioral dimension. The affective dimension encompasses emotional responses associated with WP. Previous literature notes that common affective responses can include: fear (e.g., possible downward mobility in the absence of race-based advantages), guilt (e.g., feelings of guilt for having unearned advantages in society), and anger (e.g., defensive response coupled with the denial of White privilege; Neville et al., 2000; Powell, Branscombe, & Schmitt, 2005; Spainerman et al., 2008). Cognitive dimensions of WP attitudes focus on the continuum of one's awareness of WP, ranging from the denial of WP to critical consciousness (e.g., accepting responsibility for change at both personal and institutional levels; Pinterest et al., 2009). The behavioral reactions to WP focus on individual's intentions and actions associated with this privilege. These actions/intentions range from apathy (e.g., disinterest in discussions or other learning opportunities) to actions that work towards dismantling WP. Based on this multidimensional conceptualization of WP attitudes, Pinterest and colleagues (2009) developed

the *White Privilege Attitudes Scale* (see Appendix E) that integrates the affective, cognitive and behavioral dimensions to assess White individuals' attitudes towards WP.

The *White Privilege Attitudes Scale* (see Appendix E) consists of four interrelated but conceptually distinct subscales; including the willingness to confront WP, anticipated costs of addressing WP, WP awareness, and WP remorse. The willingness to confront WP reflects a behavioral dimension in its assessment of intentions to address WP (Pinterest et al., 2009). Items relate to participants' plan(s) to address WP present in society (e.g., I plan to work to change our unfair social structure that promotes WP) and their willingness to explore their own WP (e.g., I am eager to find out more about letting go of WP). The anticipated costs of addressing WP reflect a mixture of the affective dimensions that are linked with potential behaviors associated with the fear of addressing or losing one's WP. This factor includes items that reflect a degree of trepidation about addressing WP (e.g., If I address White privilege, I might alienate my family) or about the potential of losing one's own privilege (e.g., I worry about what giving up some WP might mean for me). WP awareness is composed of items that represent the cognitive dimension of WP attitudes. These items reflect the degrees of consciousness and understanding of WP and racial inequities in the United States' society (e.g., Plenty of people of color are more privileged than Whites). WP remorse reflects the affective dimension of WP and measures the emotional responses (e.g., shame and anger) about having race-based privileges (e.g., White people should feel guilty about having WP). Important for the current study, these four factors associated with WP attitudes could potentially impact the acceptability of using racial microaggressions. For example, WP awareness (a cognitive dimension) might predict the acceptability of using racial microaggressions among majority group members; the more aware a White individual is of their privilege, the less likely this individual might be to accept the use of microaggressions. Although

being aware of WP might predict less acceptability of microaggressions, awareness might only

be the first step in this prediction. For example, a White individual could be aware of privilege,

however, if this person is unwilling to address that privilege and/or feels anxious about the

associated costs of addressing WP, then this person might endorse the acceptability and usage of

microaggressions. Overall, awareness (the cognitive dimension) alone might not predict less

acceptability. The behavioral and affective dimensions of WP also may serve to influence the

acceptability of microaggression usage, beyond awareness.

　　　Prior research appears to support these assertions that the WP dimensions may be used to

predict the acceptability of using racial microaggressions. In a two-part study done by Conway

and colleagues (2017), researchers examined how an individual's racial prejudice relates to a

White individual's desire to learn or avoid information about WP. In study one, White

participants were asked to complete measures regarding their race attitudes (attitudes towards

both Black and White people) ranging from very cold to very warm, a modified version of the

White Privilege Attitudes Scale (desire to change WP; see Appendix E), and the *Information*

Avoidance Scale (desire to avoid information regarding WP). Results showed that both explicit

and implicit racial attitudes predicted the desire to change WP and the desire to avoid learning

information about WP. That is, when individuals preferred their own racial in-group compared to

out-groups (majority group compared to minority group), there was a stronger desire to avoid

learning about WP. When individuals reported warmer attitudes towards racial out-groups, there

was less desire to avoid additional information and greater desire to change WP.

　　　In the second study, the same measures were used to assess race attitudes, a measure for

potential reasons for avoiding information about WP, and the same measure used in study one to

assess the desire to avoid additional information about WP. Results suggest that individual's

distrust in new information, perceived threats to a person's worldview, and external social pressures are consistent predictors to avoid additional information about WP and desire to change WP. Contrary to expected results, an anticipated negative affect predicted the desire to change WP. When individuals anticipated a greater negative outcome due to their WP, they were more willing to make a change to dismantle WP.

In a similar study, Boatright-Horowitz, Frazier, Harps-Logan, and Crockett (2013) explored if the exposure to McIntosh's (1988) list of White Privileges could lead to attitude changes about racism in White college students. College students in general psychology courses were given a pre-test to determine their attitudes towards racism and WP in the United States prior to being exposed to the list of White privileges. Participants were then asked to rate their level of agreement with items on McIntosh's White Privileges list. A post-test was used to assess whether exposure to the list of White privileges affected attitudes towards racism and privilege. Results indicate that White students showed significantly higher levels of agreement with the list of White privileges compared to minority students. White students also reported significantly higher levels of racism in the United States society today (i.e., modern racism) and if racism affected their own behavior after being exposed to the White privilege list. Similarly, admissions that they experienced WP, reports that other people are likely to view them as racist, and that White individuals in today's society can be viewed as racist increased significantly from the pre-test to the post-test. Overall, when individuals became more aware of the WP they experience within society, their attitudes towards modern racism and their own privileges shifted. These attitudes towards racism and WP may be influenced by other factors as well, such as the perceivers' own beliefs about the prevalence of racial prejudice and discrimination.

The research detailed above collectively supports the idea that an individual's awareness of WP has the potential to influence attitudes and behaviors. To expand the prior research, the current study aims to examine how an individual's awareness of WP could potentially lead to majority group members finding racial microaggressions less acceptable. However, it is anticipated that the behavioral and affective dimensions of WP also will influence this relationship.

Propensity to make attributions to prejudice. As social norms regarding overt forms of racism have evolved, becoming subtler and more ambiguous (i.e., modern racism, such as microaggressions), the likelihood that individuals are perceived as racist has decreased (Saucier et al., 2005). Due to the ambiguous nature of the expressions that are the current societal norms (i.e., application of Group Norm Theory), judgements about whether or not prejudice has been expressed have become difficult for others to perceive. A multitude of factors related to both the perceiver and the situation can potentially influence this judgement. Prior research has focused primarily on individual differences and situational factors affecting majority members attributions to prejudice (Wang, Stroebe, & Dovidio, 2012). Miller and Saucier (2018) looked to expand this literature by developing the *Propensity to Make Attributions to Prejudice Scale* (PMAPS; see Appendix F). The PMAPS is based on three key beliefs (described in detail below). However, overall the PMAPS serves as a measure of individual differences in majority group members' tendencies to make prejudice attributions; this scale measures how likely a majority group member is to not only recognize prejudice and discrimination, but also attribute this prejudice as a cause for a variety of situations.

The PMAPS consists of three key beliefs that contribute to an individual's tendency to make prejudice attributions: pervasiveness, vigilance, and trivialization. Individuals who may

hold beliefs that prejudice is common in today's society may be more likely to consider

prejudice as a possible explanation used to assert cause given certain situations. For example, if

an individual believes prejudice is a pervasive part of the United States society, then they are less

likely to endorse the statement, "there's only one race, the human race." Individuals who score

high on the PMAPS are more likely to rate this statement as prejudicial compared to individuals

who score low on the PMAPS.

In addition, individuals who tend to be more vigilant to environmental cues that may

indicate racial prejudice may have a greater tendency to see prejudice in their social world

(Miller & Saucier, 2018). Individuals who have become primed to be more vigilant in identifying

prejudice cues (exposure to some form of prejudice or discrimination), could be more likely to

make attributions to prejudice. The trivialization of minority groups' concerns, or the belief that

minorities unfairly claim that they are the victims of prejudice and discrimination can potentially

lead to a decreased tendency to make prejudice attributions (Miller & Saucier, 2018). This

trivialization is often used to justify negative attitudes towards racial minorities by denying that

discrimination occurs. For example, the statement, "race doesn't play a role in who gets pulled

over by the police" denies the racial profiling that occurs in the United States (Mekawi & Todd,

2018).

The PMAPS was the first scale to examine individual differences of majority group

members and third-party observers' attributions to prejudice. After the psychometric properties

of PMAPS were established, a fourth study was conducted to examine how the distribution of

individual differences in the tendency to make attributions to prejudice might vary among

different demographic groups. Consistent with prior research, results suggest that White men

were less likely to make attributions to prejudice (i.e., less likely to recognize

prejudice/racism/discrimination) compared to Black men and women, Hispanic men and women, and Asian men and women. White women also were less likely to make attributions to prejudice compared to minority individuals; however, White women were more likely to make attributions to prejudice compared to White men (Miller & Saucier, 2018). While there are differences between demographic groups, results suggest that since the tendency to make attributions to prejudice varies considerably within the groups, it is more of an individual difference rather than a disposition to any one social group. Important to the current study, individual differences in the propensity to make attributions to prejudice may serve as an additional factor that can explain the acceptability of racial microaggressions among majority group members.

Overview of the Current Study

Overall, a large body of prejudice and discrimination literature exists. This literature indicates that prejudice and discrimination have evolved over time to include more subtle expressions. This shift may be attributed to a change in societal norms, as indicated by the Group Norm Theory (Sheirf & Sheirf, 1953). As society has deemed overt, more traditional forms of racism to be unjust and unacceptable, the nature in which these expressions are displayed has evolved to be more consistent with societal expectations. Unfortunately, subtle forms of prejudice and discrimination (e.g., microaggressions) still have negative effects among those who experience them. As such, research designed to empirically examine these subtle forms of prejudice and discrimination are warranted. With prior research examining microaggressions in mind, the current study seeks to fill gaps in prior literature through a focus on perpetrators, those who use and accept racial microaggressions. More specifically, the current study will expand on prior research to examine why and when majority group members (i.e., perpetrators) might use and find microaggressions acceptable. Due to the pervasive nature of microaggressions, it is vital

to understand why and when microaggressions are utilized and accepted by majority groups.

Doing so might lead to a better understanding of this phenomenon as well as potential

programming created to decrease the frequency of microaggressions (Hook et al., 2016).

       The current study will investigate the relationship between a majority group member's

awareness towards WP and if this person believes that using racial microaggressions are

acceptable. This relationship between WP awareness and acceptability of microaggressions

stems from prior research that links more awareness to less prejudice and discrimination. In

addition to WP awareness, three additional variables associated with WP (i.e., costs associated

with WP, willingness to confront WP, and WP remorse) have been identified as mediators.

These mediators may help to further explain why a majority group member finds

microaggressions to be acceptable; although awareness of WP may predict the acceptability of

microaggressions, the willingness to dismantle WP, the costs associated with WP, and WP

remorse may further explain the underlying process of awareness and acceptability of

microaggressions. Furthermore, one's PMAPS also will be examined. This variable will be

measured as an individual difference, and as such, will be used as a moderator to further explain

when WP awareness may predict the acceptability of microaggressions. The following

hypotheses have been developed based on prior research and theory.

Hypotheses

       The current study will test how majority group members' WP awareness, willingness to

confront WP, anticipated costs of addressing WP, WP remorse, and the PMAPS relate to the

acceptability of using racial microaggressions. The following hypotheses have been developed to

test the relationships between these variables of interest as well as potential mediating and

moderating effects.

Hypothesis one. First, we will assess the relationship between each variable of interest and the acceptability of using racial microaggressions. Based on past research, the awareness of WP is hypothesized to be significantly negatively correlated with the acceptability of racial microaggressions. In addition, a significant negative correlation is hypothesized between the willingness to confront WP and WP remorse in relation to the acceptability of racial microaggressions. A significant positive relationship is hypothesized between anticipated costs of addressing WP and the acceptability of using racial microaggressions. Finally, a significant negative correlation is anticipated with respect to the PMAPS and the acceptability of racial microaggressions.

Hypothesis two. If significant correlations are found between the variables of interest and the acceptability of using racial microaggressions, we will test for mediation effects. It is expected that although the awareness of WP may predict the acceptability of using racial microaggressions, the willingness to confront WP, WP remorse, and the costs of addressing WP will serve as full mediators.

Hypothesis three. An individual's PMAPS will be tested as a moderator. It is expected that awareness of WP will negatively predict the acceptability of using racial microaggressions; however, this negative prediction will be enhanced when accounting for an individual's PMAPS.

METHOD

Participants

Approximately 202 participants were recruited from the online survey administration system, Amazon's Mechanical Turk™. Efforts were made to recruit participants from each of the five regions of the United States (Midwest = 24.1%, Northeast = 24.6%, Southeast = 17.8%, Southwest = 14.1%, West = 19.4%; see table 1) to reduce any potential sampling bias.

Mechanical Turk is an online survey system that allows market researchers to test certain

products and/or ask survey questions. Participants, called Workers through this system, can see

surveys on their work dashboard and determine which study they choose to participate in from a

list of options. Participants/Workers are then paid for their participation in the study. To fill a gap

in prior research that has mainly focused on the impact of microaggressions when experienced

by minority group members, this study focused on Caucasian individuals. Efforts were made to

recruit an almost equal number of men (N =104) and women (N = 85) who identify as

Caucasian[2] (see table 2). Exclusions were made based on age to avoid sampling a protected

population; all participants were over the age of 18 and under the age of 65, with an average age

of 36.76 (*SD* = 16.51). About 50% of the sample indicated having a bachelor's degree (see table

3); and about 65% were employed full time (working 40 hours or more per week; see table 4).

All IRB procedures and APA ethical guidelines were followed.

Materials

   The White Privilege Attitudes Scale (WPAS). Participants completed the *White*

Privilege Attitudes Scale (Pinterits et al., 2009; see Appendix E) that consists of 28 questions

rated on a 6-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree; 6 = Strongly Agree). The 28 items

comprise four factors: willingness to confront WP (12-item behavioral measure; α = .95),

anticipated costs of addressing WP (six-item affective and behavioral measure; α = .81), WP

awareness (four-item cognitive measure; α = .84), and WP remorse (six-item affective measure;

α = .91). This scale has been found to be a reliable and valid measure; based on the Cronbach's

alpha scores listed above, the subscales used in the current study support the internal consistency

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[2] One participant self-identified as "other" when asked about gender. Analyses were conducted with and without this participant included. Results (significance and patterns/trends) did not change, thus, we elected to include this person in all analyses that follow.

of the scale. Participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with statements like "I

accept responsibility to change White privilege; I am ashamed of my White privilege; If I were

to speak up against White privilege, I fear losing my friends; Our social structure system

promotes White privilege." Composite scores were created for each of the four subscales by

averaging the items used to measure the WP awareness, willingness to confront WP, the

anticipated costs of addressing WP, and WP remorse.

Propensity to Make Attributions to Prejudice (PMAPS). Participants completed the

Propensity to Make Attributions to Prejudice Scale (Miller & Saucier, 2018; see Appendix F).

The PMAPS consists of 15 questions rated on a 9-point Likert scale (1= Strongly Disagree; 9 =

Strongly Agree). These 15 questions measure aspects relevant to how pervasive racial prejudice

is (e.g., "people discriminate against people who are not like them"), trivialization of a targets'

concerns about racism (e.g., "racial minorities are too sensitive about stereotypes"), vigilance in

recognizing expressions of prejudice (e.g., "I think about why racial minorities are treated

stereotypically"), and confidence in one's ability to recognize prejudice (e.g., "I am quick to

recognize prejudice"). A composite score was calculated by averaging the items used to measure

the propensity to make attributions to prejudice (α = .86).

Acceptability of Racial Microaggressions Scale (ARMS). Participants completed the

Acceptability of Racial Microaggressions (Mekawi & Todd, 2018; see Appendix D), a 34-item

survey asking participants to rate on a 6-point Likert type scale (1 = Totally Unacceptable; 6 =

Perfectly Acceptable) how acceptable they believe it would be to say micro-aggressive

statements to a racially diverse group of peers and/or engage in micro-aggressive behaviors. This

34-item scale measures things such as victim blaming (e.g., "African Americans would get more

jobs if they dressed more professionally"), exoticizing (e.g., "You're so beautiful, you look like

Pocahontas"), power evasion (e.g., "When people get shot by the police, it is more about what they were doing rather than their race"), and color evasion (e.g., "People shouldn't see race anymore"). A composite score was calculated by averaging the items used to measure the acceptability of racial microaggressions ($\alpha = .95$).

Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale- Short Form C. Given the sensitive nature of the questions above, participants also completed the *Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale - Short Form C* (Reynolds, 1982; see Appendix G). This is a 13-item questionnaire ($\alpha = .70$) that measures participants tendencies to respond in a socially desirable way; items were rated on a 6-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree; 6 = Strongly Agree). Participants rated their level of agreement with statements such as, "It is sometimes hard for me to go on with my work if I am not encouraged; No matter who I'm talking to, I'm always a good listener; I sometimes feel resentful when I don't get my way; On a few occasions, I have given up doing something because I thought too little of my ability."

Demographics. Participants completed questions to assess age, sex, ethnicity, occupation, level of education, and geographic location in which they live (see Appendix C)

Procedure

Participants had the option to participate in this study by selecting it from a list of surveys offered on their Mechanical Turk worker accounts. First, participants read an informed consent statement (see Appendix B) and were informed that if they chose to continue with the study, they were providing their electronic consent. The informed consent detailed the nature of the study, indicated that the study was voluntary, and that responses were kept anonymous. Next, the participants completed an online version of the Stroop Task (see Appendix C). Previous literature indicates that individuals who have been cognitively loaded (i.e., participate in a

difficult cognitive task) respond in a more honest and less strategic fashion (Stodel, 2015). Once

participants completed the Stroop task, they received three different numbers that corresponded

with their congruent speed, incongruent speed, and overall Stroop score from the task.

Participants were required to record their scores to move on with the survey. Next, they

answered a series of demographic questions. Participants then completed the questionnaires

detailed above in random order. Finally, participants were debriefed (see Appendix H) and

provided with the contact information for the principle investigator and faculty advisor, as well

as the department ethics chair and the university IRB. Payment was deposited into their

Mechanical Turk worker accounts after the study was completed.

Design and Statistical Analysis

This study examined if a participant's awareness of WP predicts acceptability of racial

microaggressions. The willingness to confront WP, the anticipated costs of addressing WP, and

WP remorse were examined as potential mediators that may help to explain why awareness

predicts the acceptability of racial microaggressions. Further, the PMAPS was used as an

individual difference moderator. If found to be a significant moderator, the PMAPS may help to

explain when WP awareness predicts acceptability of racial microaggressions.

Standard data cleaning procedures were utilized. The data were screened for missing

data; twenty-two scores on the raw items used to calculate the composite scores were found to be

missing at random, and as such, the average score for each raw item was inserted in place of the

missing data. Participants who did not complete at least 10% of the survey were not used in the

analyses. Individuals who also appeared to be answering in a socially desirable way or in a

manner that indicated they may not be truthful when responding were not included in the

analyses. Social desirability was determined based on responses to the *Marlowe- Crowne Social*

Desirability Scale (see Appendix G). With previous research in mind (Stodel, 2015), we created

a cut-off point of 1.5 standard deviations above the sample mean ($M = 5.33$) and below the

sample ($M = 2.33$). A total of 12 participants scored outside of the cut-off range. Overall, 190

participants were included in the analyses that follow. Examination of the boxplots for each

composite variable indicated no significant outliers. Examination of the histograms indicated that

the distribution shapes for each of the variables were normally distributed; skewness and kurtosis

were used as an additional measure of distribution. For each variable of interest, the skewness

and kurtosis values were within the acceptable range of -1 to 1 with skewness scores ranging

from -.77 — .11 and kurtosis ranging from -.92 — .60.

RESULTS

Test of Hypothesis One

A series of bivariate correlations were conducted. These correlations assessed the

relationships between the acceptability of racial microaggressions and the variables of interest.

As expected, the analyses revealed that the acceptability of racial microaggressions was

negatively correlated with the awareness of WP [$r = -.56$; $p < .001$], the willingness to confront

WP [$r = -.26$; $p < .001$], and the PMAPS [$r = -.49$; $p < .001$]. Further, the acceptability of racial

microaggressions was positively correlated to the anticipated costs of addressing WP [$r = .31$; p

$< .001$]. White privilege remorse was not significantly related to the acceptability of racial

microaggressions [$r = -.08$; $p = .26$], although the expected negative relationship was seen.

Test of Hypothesis Two

A series of mediation analyses were performed to test hypothesis two. Liner regressions

were used to test for mediation following the steps outlined by the Baron and Kenny (1986)

method for all variables of interest. First, a regression was performed using the awareness of WP

as a predictor and the acceptability of racial microaggressions as the criterion. A significant and negative β was found [t(189) = -9.26, p < .001; β = -.56]. Three separate mediation analyses then were conducted to test for mediation; the willingness to confront WP, WP remorse, and the anticipated costs of addressing WP were tested as mediators.

A regression was conducted between the awareness of WP (predictor) and the willingness to confront WP (criterion). A significant positive β emerged [t(189) = 9.94, p < .001; R^2 = .34; β = .59]. Next, the willingness to confront WP was used as the predictor and the acceptability of racial microaggressions was used as the criterion. A significant negative β was found [t(189) = -3.66, p < .001; β = -.26]. Finally, a regression was performed using the awareness of WP and the willingness to confront WP as predictors with the acceptability of racial microaggressions as the criterion. When controlling for the willingness to confront WP, there was still a significant negative β between awareness and the acceptability of racial microaggressions [t(189) = -8.30, p < .001; R^2 = .32; β = -.62]. Examining the result further, the β value did not decrease; however, the t value did decrease. This may suggest a slight partial mediation effect (see Figure 1).

A regression then was conducted between the awareness of WP (predictor) and WP remorse (criterion). A significant positive β emerged [t(189) = 7.69, p < .001; β = .48]. Remorse then was used as the predictor and the acceptability of racial microaggressions as the criterion; however, a significant β value was not found [t(189) = -1.14, p = .26; β = -.08]. Because this step was not satisfied using the Baron and Kenny method, we concluded that WP remorse was not a significant mediator as it did not predict acceptability of racial microaggression on its own. See Figure 2 for the full model.

A regression then was conducted between the awareness of WP (predictor) and the costs associated with addressing WP (criterion). A significant β did not emerge [t(189) = -.36, p = .72;

β = -.03]. Given this first step in the model was not satisfied (WP awareness was not predictive

of WP costs), we concluded that the costs associated with addressing WP was not a significant

mediator. See Figure 3 for the full model.

Test of Hypothesis Three

Finally, to test hypothesis three, a moderation analysis was performed to assess the

prediction of the acceptability of racial microaggressions (Y) from the awareness of WP

(predictor) and the PMAPS (moderator). There was a significant negative correlation between

the awareness of WP and PMAPS [r = .72; p < .001] which preliminarily indicated potential

issues with multicollinearity. To reduce any possible issues of multicollinearity, the awareness of

WP and PMAPS were centered. An interaction term using these centered variables was then

created.

A hierarchical regression was performed to evaluate whether the interaction between the

awareness of WP and PMAPS was predictive of the acceptability of racial microaggressions.

For step one of the regression, the centered awareness variable and centered PMAPS variable

were entered. The interaction term was entered in step two of the model. Overall, the regression

model was significant [F (3, 187) = 34.13, p < .001; R = .60; Adjusted R^2 = .34]. Together, the

awareness of WP and the PMAPS entered in step two of the model predicted an additional 3% of

the variance associated with the acceptability of racial microaggressions. Importantly, the

interaction of awareness and PMAPS was significant (β = -.17; t (189) = -2.804, p < .001).

Simple slopes analysis then was performed to assess the effect of WP awareness on the

acceptability of racial microaggressions at varying levels of the moderator (i.e., low and high

PMAPS). As expected, results suggest that high levels of WP awareness and PMAPS were

associated with less acceptability of racial microaggressions; this effect appears to be the

strongest when both awareness and PMAPS are high ($t = -5.83$) compared to low ($t = -3.18$). See Figure 4.

DISCUSSION

The current study addressed gaps in prior literature by focusing on perpetrators, or majority group members who may find racial microaggressions to be acceptable. More specifically, the current study expanded on prior research and examined why and when majority group members might find racial microaggressions acceptable. White privilege (WP) and the Propensity to make attributions to prejudice (PMAPS) were chosen as factors that might mediate and moderate this acceptability, respectively. These variables were selected based on prior research connecting WP and attributions to potential prejudice and discrimination; however, to our knowledge, these variables have yet to be tested in relation to the acceptability of racial microaggressions among majority group members (Mekawi et al., 2016; Miller & Saucier, 2018; Pinterits et al., 2009).

Hypothesis One

A series of bivariate correlations were conducted to determine if the variables of interest were related to the acceptability of racial microaggressions. Overall, each variable of interest, with the exception of WP remorse, was significantly related to the acceptability of racial microaggressions in the expected direction; thus, we concluded that the findings mostly support hypothesis one. With respect to awareness, results indicated that the acceptability of racial microaggressions was both significant and negatively related to the awareness of WP. That is, when individuals indicated high level of awareness with regard to WP they were less likely to find the measured racial microaggressions to be acceptable. The awareness of WP reflects the cognitive dimension associated with WP attitudes, including the consciousness and

understanding of WP and racial inequities in the United States' society (Pinterest et al., 2009).

Thus, when individuals report that they are aware that WP exists and that there are still racial

disparities present within society, they are also viewing statements that put-down a racial

minority group to be unacceptable to use. This is consistent with prior literature that indicates

when White college students are exposed to WP (or their awareness of WP is increased through

exposure) they are likely to report a greater willingness to attend campus organizations/events

that focus of reducing racism and/or racial microaggressions (Boatright-Horowitz et al., 2013).

This suggests that when the cognitive awareness of WP increases (or is present), individuals may

be more willing to engage in the behavioral steps needed to start reducing racism or increasing

positive racial interactions on college campuses.

In addition, the willingness to confront WP also was found to have a significant negative

relationship with the acceptability of racial microaggressions. The willingness to confront WP

reflects a behavioral dimension and the likelihood that an individual will not only address WP in

society, but also how likely they are to consider the meaning and consequences of their own

privilege (Pinterest et al., 2009). When individuals reported a high willingness to acknowledge

and confront WP, they also reported lower acceptability of racial microaggressions. This finding

is consistent with previous research by Knowles and colleagues (2014) that suggests that White

individuals become more likely to take actions to dismantle their WP (e.g., embrace policies and

behaviors aimed at reducing ingroup privilege) when they report high moral concerns for the past

treatment of racial minorities. Thus, when majority individuals believe that racial minorities have

been treated unfairly (e.g., workforce inequality, unfair ingroup policies, racial

microaggressions) based on the way our society is structured and the privileges afforded to some,

but not others, they tend to be more willing to take steps to dismantle future instances of WP (Knowles, Lowery, Chow, & Unzueta, 2014).

Further, there was a significant and positive relationship between the anticipated costs of addressing WP and the acceptability of racial microaggressions. When individuals reported that there are more costs associated with addressing WP (e.g., losing friends or family), they were more accepting of racial microaggressions. This finding may (in part) be explained by social dominance orientation. Based on the idea of a racially stratified society, or the extent to which one desires that their in-group is dominant/superior to out-groups, White individuals have been positioned at the top of the racial hierarchy since the birth of the United States in 1776 (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994). When confronted with potential costs of addressing the privileges that may be a result of this social hierarchy, majority group individuals may be more likely to endorse attitudes/beliefs that minority group individuals are second class citizens to maintain the benefits their privilege afford (Worthington, Navarro, Loewy, & Hart, 2008).

A significant relationship was not found between WP remorse and the acceptability of racial microaggressions. While no significant relationship was found (thus not fully supporting hypothesis one), the direction of the relationship was negative which was expected. When examining the mean value for this variable, we discovered that individuals reported being neutral in their WP remorse ($M = 3.5$ on a 5-point scale) in regards to the unearned advantages that their WP had given them in society; however, the sample did report racial microaggressions as being slightly unacceptable ($M = 3.4$ on a 5-point scale). Prior literature suggests that WP guilt (or remorse) can be infrequent and typically self-focused/ compensatory; remorse may be used in a way to make a White individual feel better and/or alleviate guilt that may result from WP (Iyer, Leach, & Pedersen, 2004). Given prior research that indicates remorse may be infrequent and/or

used in a manner that serves to make White individuals feel better about their own actions, we believe that asking our participants to merely think about their unearned advantages may not be enough to elicit an emotional response from individuals. Spanierman and Cabrera (2014) suggest key factors of WP remorse are evoking accountability and the notion that White guilt is a middle-class emotion and seen much less often among working-class individuals. Many of the items on the WP remorse subscale did not specifically assess accountability specifically, making it difficult to determine if the neutral remorse was the true attitude of participants and/or a limitation of the measure. Furthermore, it is possible that the sample comprised part of the working-class that may be unfamiliar with White guilt.

Finally, there was a significant and negative correlation between the PMAPS and the acceptability of racial microaggressions. The PMAPS is an individual difference measure that assesses not only an individual's ability to recognize prejudice and discrimination, but also attribute prejudice as a cause for a variety of situations. When individuals report that they are highly keen to attribute prejudice as the cause of situations, they also find racial microaggressions to be less acceptable. Prior research has primarily focused on individual differences in third-party observer's tendencies to make (or not to make) attributions to prejudice (Miller & Saucier, 2018). These results confirmed the existing literature that individuals do differ in their tendencies to make attributions to prejudice and expanded this literature by suggesting that these individual differences also are related to how acceptable individuals view racial microaggressions.

Hypothesis Two

A series mediation models were performed to determine if the willingness to confront WP, the anticipated costs of addressing WP, and WP remorse would serve as full mediators for

the relationship between the awareness of WP and the acceptability of racial microaggressions.

Essentially, this hypothesis tested why individuals may or may not find racial microaggressions

to be acceptable. The analyses showed that these three variables did not serve as full mediators,

and as such, hypothesis two was not supported. These findings may suggest that the awareness of

WP is a more important factor than originally anticipated to explain why individuals may or may

not find racial microaggressions to be acceptable. Prior research suggests that there has been a

dramatic increase in support for the principles of equality in the US; however, although

Americans may acknowledge support for equality, the actual implementation of policies

designed to implement equality has not yet been fully recognized (Hurwitz & Peffley, 1992;

Tunch & Hughes, 2011). This may suggest that individuals are aware that there is a problem in

the United States that needs to be addressed. However, even though there is an awareness of

inequality, when it comes time to take behavioral action to start actual change, individuals may

fall short. These results are similar to the current study, which also discovered that the awareness

of WP is predictive of the acceptability of racial microaggressions, and contrary to the original

hypothesis, the more behavioral and affective components of WP (willingness to confront,

anticipated costs, and remorse) did not fully explain why the awareness was predictive.

An additional point to consider based on these findings is simply that the willingness to

confront WP, the anticipated costs of addressing WP, and WP remorse may not exist without the

awareness of WP. McIntosh (1988) suggests that White individuals are carefully taught not to

recognize their WP or are unaware of the existence of WP in the United States society. If a

White individual is not aware that they have unearned advantages that puts them ahead of a

minority individual in society, then they would not be cognitively aware that they should be

confronting this privilege, or that there are costs associated with giving up these privileges, or

that they should feel a sense of remorse or guilt for having these advantages. Overall, we

originally expected that awareness would be predictive of the acceptability of racial

microaggressions but would be driven by more behavioral and affective components (like

willingness to take action and feelings of remorse). Results of the current study, however,

suggest that awareness is an important factor to consider in the prediction of acceptability and

this prediction was not explained solely on behavioral and affective components of WP.

Hypothesis Three

A moderation analysis was performed to determine when individuals might find racial

microaggressions to be more/less acceptable. As expected, the results indicated that high levels

of WP awareness and PMAPS were associated with less acceptability of racial microaggressions.

This effect appears to be strongest when both the awareness of WP and PMAPS are high

compared to low. As mentioned above, the PMAPS serves as an individual difference measure of

majority groups' tendencies to recognize prejudice and discrimination and attribute prejudice as

the cause of a variety of situations (Miller & Saucier, 2018). When individuals report a high level

of the PMAPS, they are better equipped to recognize prejudice and discrimination as it happens

around them. When this individual difference is accompanied with a high awareness of WP (the

consciousness and understanding of WP and racial inequities) individuals are the least accepting

of racial microaggressions. Prior research suggests that when individuals were placed in

situations where they anticipated a prejudiced scenario occurring, they were more likely to report

concerns towards race relations after an interaction had occurred (Sawyer, Major, Casad,

Townsend, & Mendes, 2012). This finding is consistent with the current study that also found

when individuals are more attune/ more vigilant to prejudice in their daily lives and attribute this

prejudice to situational causes, they are less likely to accept racial microaggressions.

Furthermore, this finding is important as the current study is the first to our knowledge to use the

PMAPS as a moderator to WP awareness and the acceptability of racial microaggressions. As

mentioned above, prior literature has connected the increased awareness of WP to an increased

desire to attend events that are focused on decreasing racism/racial microaggressions (Boatright-

Horowitz et al., 2013). However, it is important to note that while individuals who report

extreme highs on the PMAPS scale may also tend to discount alternative, nonprejudicial

explanations (Miller, et al., 2018). That is, individuals who score on the extreme high may tend

to overly attribute prejudice as the cause of situations. With the findings of hypothesis three, a

possible explanation for when individuals are more likely to find racial microaggressions

unacceptable is when they are both high in their awareness of WP and their PMAPS.

Limitations and Future Research

Although the findings of this study further explain the relationships between the White

privilege and the acceptability of racial microaggressions, as well as explain when individuals

are the least likely to find racial microaggressions acceptable, it is important to note limitations

of the current research. First, an online version of the Stroop Task was used as a method to

reduce the chances of participants responding in a socially desirable way. Prior research suggests

that when individuals experience a high cognitive loading prior to answering questions, they may

be more likely to answer in an organic fashion (Stodel, 2015). Thus, when individuals feel as if

they are cognitively drained, they are less concerned with social desirability. This task required

participants to read color words that are written in different color ink and report the color in

which the word is written in as fast as they can.

Using this method, participants were required to participate in an online version of the

Stroop task. A link was provided at the beginning of the survey that brought participants into a

separate page where they completed the task, and were given congruent (milliseconds it took to

respond when the color word was written in the same ink), incongruent (milliseconds it took to

respond when the color word was written in different colored ink) and an overall Stroop effect

(congruent score subtracted by the incongruent score). Participants were required to enter their

congruent, incongruent, and their Stroop effect scores to SurveyMonkey before they were able to

proceed to the next question. In past literature, the Stroop task was administered concurrently

with the survey questions in a lab setting and the response speed was not timed by the

administrator (Soutschek, Strobach, Schubert, 2013). Due to the online nature of the Stroop task

used in this study, there is no way to determine if participants accurately completed the task and

if it had the desired effect of reducing social desirability responses. Along with this, we are

unaware if the use of this task altered the responses to study in any other way. It is important to

note though that we also used a measure of social desirability (the Marlowe-Crowne; see

Appendix G), and we were able to remove participants from the sample that appeared to be

responding in a socially desirable way. Future research might consider using the Stroop task if a

similar study is conducted in lab-based setting and the task can be monitored in person as well as

consider how to better monitor the task if an online survey format is used.

Second, results of current study indicate that there was not a significant relationship

between WP remorse and the acceptability of racial microaggressions. While a validated

measure was used to assess levels of WP remorse, previous research suggests that a key factor of

WP remorse is to evoke accountability for the privileges that White individuals have within

society (Spainerman et al, 2014). Many of the items on the WP remorse subscale did not assess

accountability specifically, therefore future research might benefit from adding items that assess

accountability and prime feelings of remorse. Further, WP remorse is cited as being a middle-

class emotion and is seen much less often in working class individuals (Spanierman et al., 2014). Participants in the current study may have been part of the working-class, and as such, may not have been as familiar with the WP remorse. Future research should consider this with recruited participants.

Finally, the current study focused on the factors of WP and the PMAPS as variables that might impact the acceptability of racial microaggressions. However, there are other potential variables that might impact this acceptability that should be considered for future research. For example, in the current study efforts were made to recruit participants from each of the five regions of the United States. Yet, when analyses were run to explore how the acceptability of racial microaggressions varied as a function of location, no differences were observed. The lack of differences could be explained by how the areas of the United States were measured or grouped into the Midwest, Northeast, Southeast, Southwest, and West. Perhaps future research might benefit from a more targeted measure as groupings like the "Midwest" can be a more general way to assess geographic location. Future research also might use this variable of geographic location to predict acceptability and how WP awareness (which was found to be one of the most important variables of the current study) and PMAPS may vary based on location.

Despite these limitations, this research provides information on the relationship between the four factors of WP (willingness to confront WP, the anticipated costs of addressing WP, WP awareness, and WP remorse), the PMAPS, and the acceptability of racial microaggressions. White individuals are especially important to focus on in regard to racial microaggressions research as they are the least likely to experience a microaggression and the most likely to be a perpetrator of one (Miller et al., 2018). Therefore, focusing on why and when they may find microaggressions acceptable is an important addition to the prior literature. Although some

findings of the current study were non-significant, results did indicate that the more aware an

individual is of their WP the less acceptable they find racial microaggressions. Also, the results

of the current study suggest that individuals are the least likely to accept racial microaggressions

when they are high in both their awareness of WP and their PMAPS. Overall, more research is

needed to better understand why individuals might find racial microaggressions acceptable,

beyond the awareness of WP and PMAPS. However, the results of the current study, in

combination with prior research, provide preliminary support that continued research on this

topic is important.

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TABLES

Table 1

Region of Residence

Region	Frequency	%
Midwest	46	24.1
Northeast	47	24.6
Southeast	34	17.8
Southwest	27	14.1
West	37	19.4
Total	191	100

Table 2

Reported Sex

Sex	Frequency	%
Male	104	54.5
Female	85	44.5
Other	1	.5
Total	191	100

Table 3

Education Level

Level of Education	Frequency	%
No Schooling	1	.5
High School Graduate/ GED	20	10.5
Trade/ Technical/ Vocational Training	6	3.1
Some College Credit, No Degree	26	13.6
Associate's degree (e.g., AA, AS)	10	5.2
Bachelor's Degree (e.g., BA, BS)	96	50.3
Master's Degree (e.g., MA, MS)	29	15.2
Professional Degree (e.g., MD, DDS, DVM)	1	.5
Doctoral Degree (e.g., PhD, EdD)	1	.5
Total	190	99.5

Table 4

Employment Status

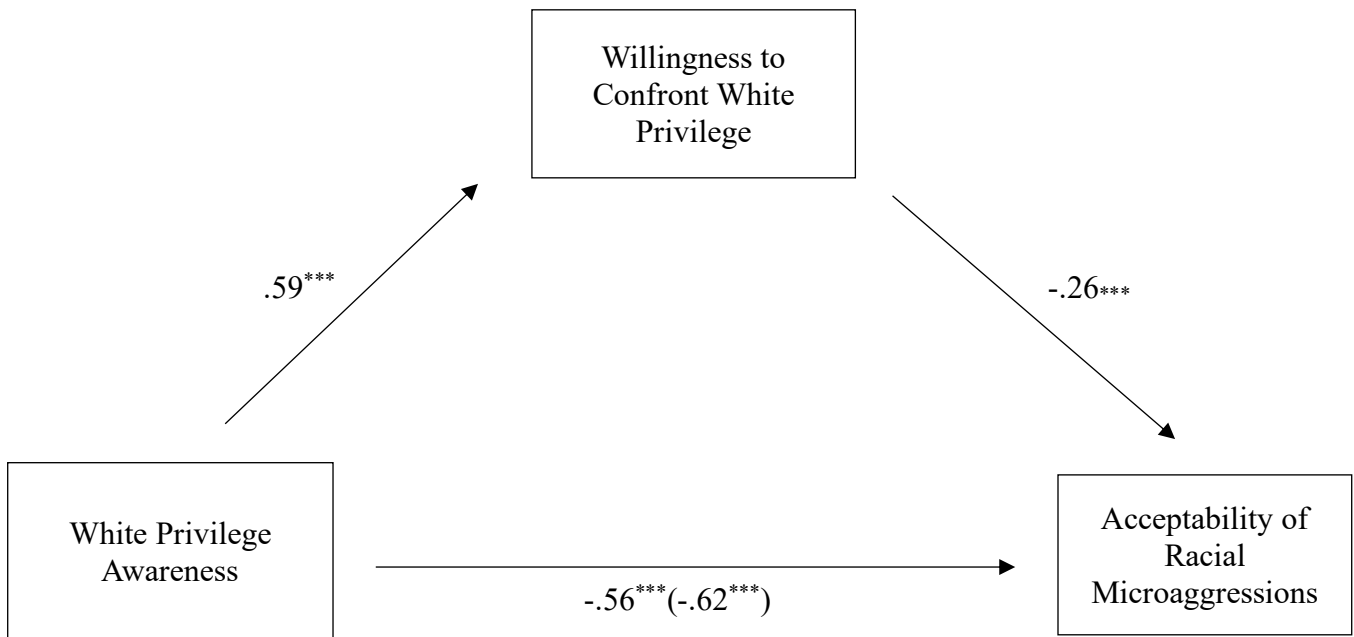| Employment Status	Frequency	%
Employed Full Time (40 or more hours per week)	125	65.4
Employed Part time (up to 39 hours per week)	21	11.0
Unemployed and currently looking for work	7	3.7
Unemployed not currently looking for work	2	1.0
Student	5	2.6
Retired	4	2.1
Homemaker	10	5.2
Self-employed	14	7.3
Unable to work	1	.5
Total	189	99.0

FIGURES

Figure 1. Standardized regression coefficients for the relationship between White privilege awareness and the acceptability of racial microaggressions as mediated by the willingness to confront White privilege. The standardized regression coefficient between White privilege awareness and the acceptability of racial microaggressions, controlling for the willingness to confront White privilege, is in parentheses. ***$p < .001$.
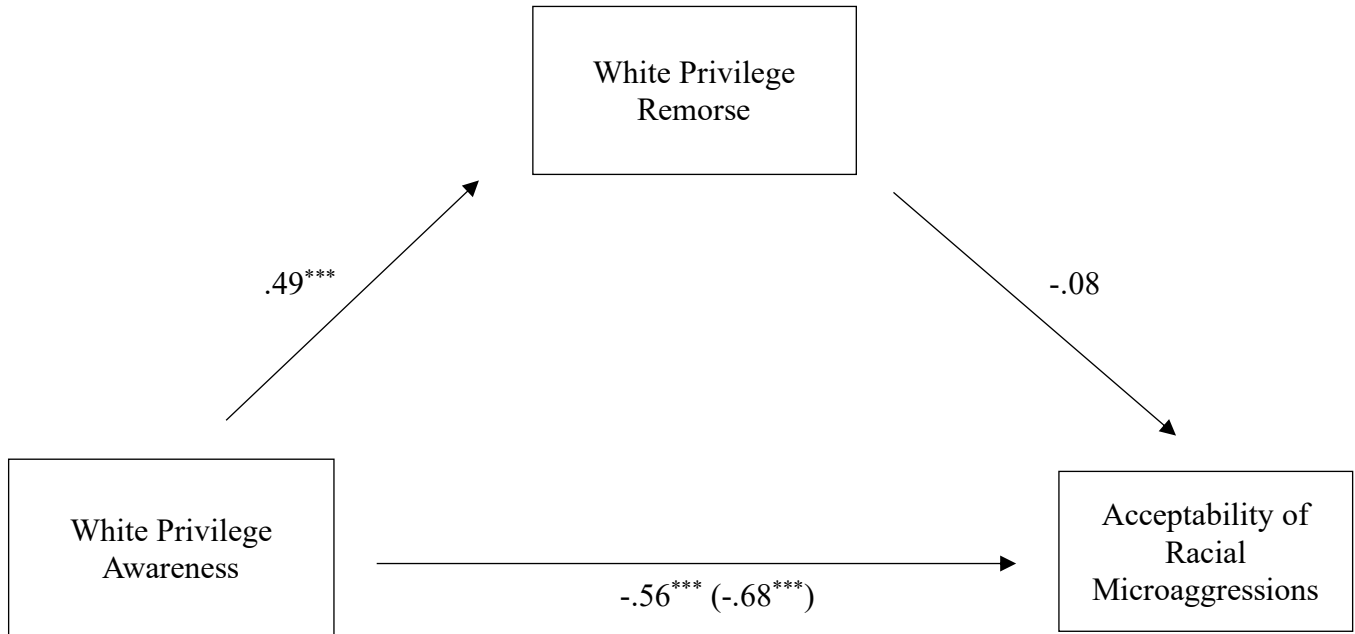
Figure 2. Standardized regression coefficients for the relationship between White privilege awareness and the acceptability of racial microaggressions as mediated by White privilege remorse. $^{***}p < .001$.
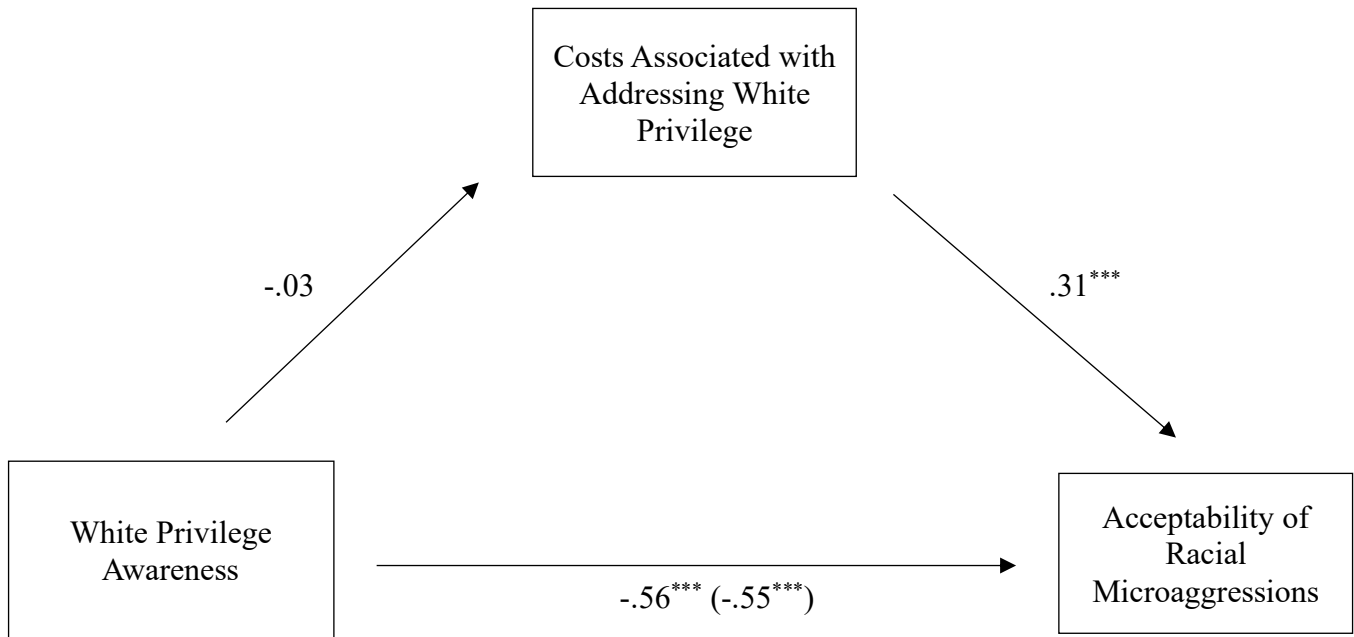
Figure 3. Standardized regression coefficients for the relationship between White privilege awareness and the acceptability of racial microaggressions as mediated by the anticipated costs of addressing White privilege. [***]$p < .001$.
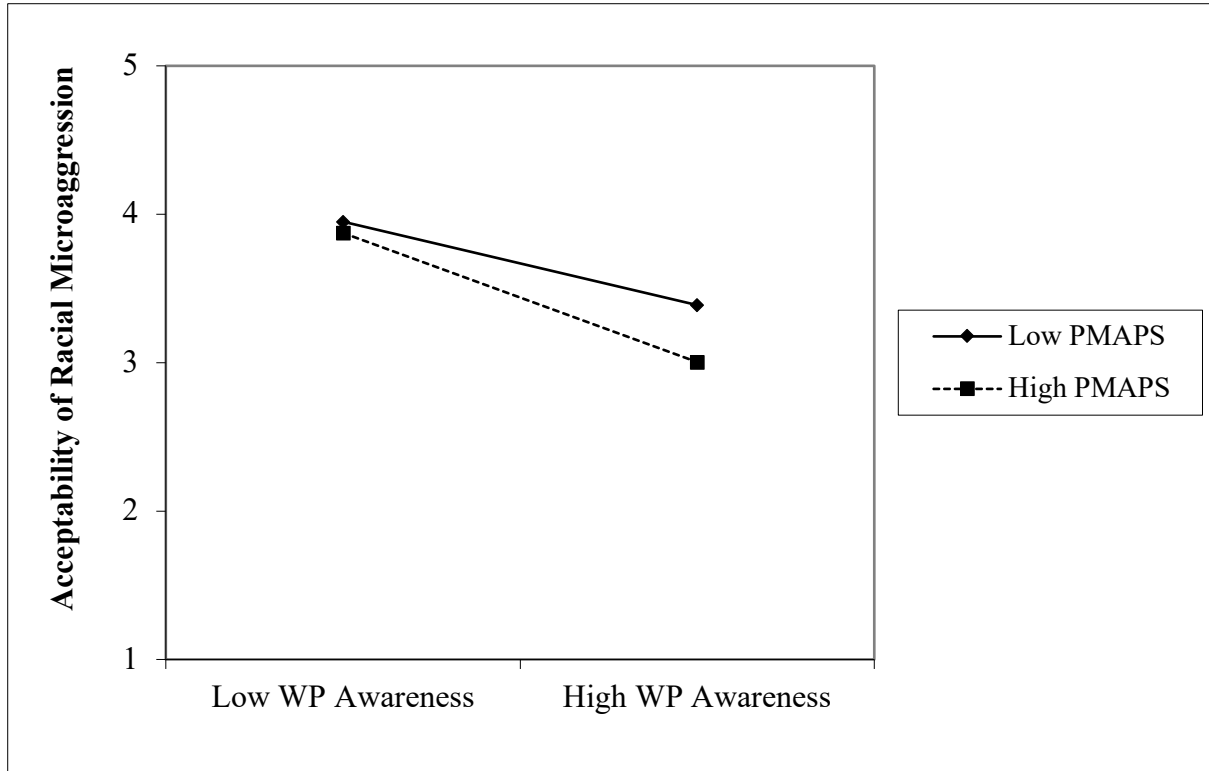
Figure 4. Simple slope analysis of the awareness of WP and the acceptability of racial microaggressions moderated by the PMAPS.

Appendix A

<div align="center">

Recruitment Message

</div>

Hello. My name is Jordan Sparrow and I am a graduate student in the Psychology Department at Fort Hays State University in Hays, KS. I would like to invite you to participate in a research experiment. The purpose of our experiment is to examine individual's views towards groups they may or may not be a part of and how privileges may play a role in forming opinions. If you choose to participate, you will be given a survey to fill out asking questions about your behaviors and attitudes towards groups that you may or may not be a part of. You will be compensated $0.50 for your time and participation in this study. I would appreciate your help with this research project. If you would like to participate you will be asked to fill out a consent form related to the study. You will then be asked to complete a survey. If you choose to participate, the study will take approximately 20-30 minutes. If you have any questions about the study and/or would like more information about the study before making a decision to participate, please contact me (Jordan Sparrow) or my faculty adviser (Dr. Whitney Whitaker).

Thank you!

Jordan Sparrow
jasparrow@mail.fhsu.edu

Dr. Whitney Whitaker
wkwhitaker@fhsu.edu

Appendix B
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH
Department of Psychology, Fort Hays State University

Study title: Attitudes, Preferences, and Acceptability Study

Name of Researchers: Jordan Sparrow
Contact Information: jasparrow@mail.fhsu.edu
Name of Faculty Supervisor & Contact Information: Dr. Whitney Whitaker
(wkwhitaker@fhsu.edu)

You are being asked to participate in a <u>research study</u>. It is your choice whether or not to participate. Your decision whether or not to participate will have no effect on you.

What is the purpose of this study?
The purpose of our experiment is to examine individual's views towards groups they may or may not be a part of. Furthermore, we are interested in examining what factors might potentially influence attitudes and behaviors towards others.

What does this study involve?
If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked you will answer several demographic questions about yourself and to complete survey questions about your attitudes towards the acceptability of using statements in groups. You will not be required to provide your name or any other identifying information. If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to click continue to indicate your given consent. After completing the survey, you will be given a debriefing statement. The length of time of your participation is approximately 20-30 minutes. Approximately 200 participants will be in this study.

Are there any benefits from participating in this study?
This research could be used to educate individuals of how our attitudes and behaviors may impact others, as well as how the potential privileges you may or may not have could influence these attitudes and behaviors.

Will you be paid or receive anything to participate in this study?
Participants will be compensated with $0.50 for their time and participation in the study.

What about the costs of this study?
There are no costs for participating in this study other than the time you will spend completing the surveys.

What are the risks involved with being enrolled in this study?
It is unlikely that participation in this project will result in harm to participants. It is unlikely that you are at risk for psychological, physical, social harm or any risk that is more than minimal. However, survey questions included in this study may be distressing

to some participants. Participants may skip any questions they do not feel comfortable answering and may withdraw from the study at any point without penalty. You may contact the researcher, faculty supervisor, and/or the Office of Scholarship and Sponsored Projects. Please see below for contact information for these resources.

How will your privacy be protected?
No names or identifying information will be asked. Your data will be identified by an ID number that will not be associated with your name. This data is collected only for research purposes. Data files which do not contain your identifying information will be kept in electronic format. Responses to survey questions will be entered into a computer program and stored for 3 years, after which the data will be deleted. Only the student researcher and faculty advisor will have access to the database. Results of the survey will be shared with the scientific community through presentation and possible publication. When results are shared, information will be presented in aggregate form and will contain no names or identifying information.

Other important items you should know:
• **Withdrawal from the study:** You may choose to stop your participation in this study at any time without penalty. If you chose to do so, please exit out of the internet window.
• **Funding:** There is no outside funding for this research project.

Whom should you call with questions about this study?
Questions about this study should be directed to either Dr. Whitney Whitaker (wkwhitaker@fhsu.edu) or the principal investigator, Jordan Sparrow (jasparrow@mail.fhsu.edu). If you have questions, concerns, or suggestions about human research at FHSU, you may call the Office of Scholarship and Sponsored Projects at FHSU (785) 628-4349 during normal business hours.

CONSENT
I have read the above information about this study. By continuing, I agree to participate in this study. I understand that I can change my mind and withdraw my consent at any time. By continuing, I understand that I am not giving up any legal rights and I am between the ages of 18 and 65.

Please click continue to advance to the survey.

Appendix C

Demographic Questions

Stroop Task Link

https://www.psytoolkit.org/experiment-library/experiment_stroop.html

1. Age _____

2. Sex

   a. Male

   b. Female

   c. Other

3. Ethnicity

   a. Caucasian

   b. African American

   c. Asian/ Pacific Islander

   d. Hispanic

   e. Native American/ Alaskan Native

   f. Other

4. Occupation
   a. Law enforcement
   b. Education
   c. Health care
   d. Mental health care
   e. Marketing
   f. Business
   g. Retail
   h. Food
   i. Service worker

Appendix D
Acceptability of Racial Microaggressions Scale (Mekawi & Todd, 2018)

Instructions: Imagine that you are talking with a racially diverse group of peers about various topics, including race and ethnicity. Rate how ACCEPTABLE you think it would be for a White group member to say the following to a racial/ethnic minority group member:

1 = Totally Unacceptable

2 = Somewhat Unacceptable

3 = Unacceptable

4 = Acceptable

5 = Somewhat Acceptable

6 = Totally Acceptable

1. Lots of people worked their way out of poverty, why can't Blacks and Latino's do the same?
2. African Americans would get more jobs if they dressed more professionally.
3. If African Americans spoke less slang, they'd be more likely to get jobs.
4. There won't be racial progress until racial minorities stop relying on handouts from the government.
5. Black people should stop using slavery as an excuse for their problems.
6. Minorities are just too sensitive about racism.
7. Latinos receive lots of unearned benefits just for being minorities.
8. People from your racial group get hired easily because companies need to meet racial quotas.
9. If Latinos spoke more English, they'd be more likely to get jobs.
10. I don't see your race, I see you as a person.
11. I don't care if you're Black, Brown, Purple, Yellow, Green … I see all people as the same.
12. There is only one race, the human race.
13. People shouldn't see race anymore.
14. Even if we look different, we are basically all the same.
15. I don't notice race.

16. We are all the same.

17. People are just people, their race doesn't matter.

18. Everyone is treated the same by the legal system.

19. Everyone has the same chance to succeed regardless of their race.

20. Everyone gets a fair legal trial regardless of their race.

21. Everyone has access to the same resources such as schools and hospitals.

22. Race doesn't play a role in who gets pulled over by the police.

23. Race doesn't matter for who gets sent to prison.

24. Everyone has access to the same educational opportunities, regardless of race or ethnicity.

25. When people get shot by the police, it is more about what they were doing rather than their race.

26. Everyone in life goes through obstacles, regardless of their race.

27. Latinos are just so sexy.

28. Native Americans are so fierce.

29. I just love black women's butts.

30. Latino men are such passionate lovers.

31. You are so exotic.

32. You're so beautiful, you're like a geisha.

33. You're so beautiful, you look like Pocahontas.

34. Your skin color is so exotic.

Appendix E

White Privilege Attitudes Scale (Pinterits et al., 2009)

Please respond using the rating scale below:

1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Somewhat Disagree

3 = Disagree

4 = Agree

5 = Somewhat Agree

6 = Strongly Agree

1. I intend to work toward dismantling White privilege.
2. I want to begin the process of eliminating White privilege.
3. I take action to dismantle White privilege.
4. I have not done anything about White privilege.
5. I plan to work to change our unfair social structure that promotes White privilege.
6. I'm glad to explore my White privilege.
7. I accept responsibility to change White privilege.
8. I look forward to creating a more racially equitable society.
9. I take action against White privilege with people I know.
10. I am eager to find out about letting go of White privilege.
11. I don't care to explore how I supposedly have unearned benefits from being White.
12. I am curious about how to communicate effectively to break down White privilege.
13. I am anxious about stirring up bad feelings by exposing the advantages that Whites have.
14. I worry about what giving up White privilege means for me.
15. If I were to speak up against White privilege, I would fear losing my friends.
16. I am worried that taking action against White privilege will hurt my relationships with other Whites.
17. If I address White privilege, I might alienate my family.
18. I am anxious about the personal work I must do within myself to eliminate White privilege.
19. Everyone has equal opportunity, so this so-called White privilege is really White bashing.
20. White people have it easier than people of color.
21. Our social structure system promotes White privilege.
22. Plenty of people of color are more privileged than Whites.
23. I am ashamed that the system is stacked in my favor because I am White.
24. I am ashamed of my White privilege.
25. I am angry knowing I have White privilege.
26. I am angry knowing that I keep benefiting from White privilege.
27. White people should feel guilty about having White privilege.
28. I feel awful about White privilege.

Appendix F

Propensity to Make Attributions to Prejudice (Miller & Saucier, 2018)

Please respond using the rating scale below:

1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Mostly Disagree

3 = Somewhat Disagree

4 = Slightly Disagree

5 = Neither Agree or Disagree

6 = Slightly Agree

7 = Somewhat Agree

8 = Mostly Agree

9 = Strongly Agree

1. People discriminate against people who are not like them.
2. Racist behavior is more widespread than people think it is.
3. Other people treat minorities based on stereotypes.
4. You'll see lots of racism if you look for it.
5. Racial minorities are too worried about being discriminated against.
6. Racial minorities are too sensitive about stereotypes.
7. Minorities today are overly worried about being victims of racism.
8. People are overly concerned about racial issues.
9. I think about why racial minorities are treated stereotypically.
10. I think about whether people's actions are prejudiced or discriminatory manner.
11. I consider whether people's actions are prejudiced or discriminatory.
12. I am on the lookout for instances of prejudice or discrimination.
13. I am quick to recognize prejudice.
14. My friends think I'm good at spotting racism.
15. I find that prejudice and discrimination are pretty easy to spot.

Appendix G

Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale- Short Form C (Reynolds, 1982)

Please respond using the rating scale below:

1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Somewhat Disagree

3 = Disagree

4 = Agree

5 = Somewhat Agree

6 = Strongly Agree

1. It is sometimes hard for me to go on with my work if I am not encouraged.
2. I sometimes feel resentful when I don't get my way.
3. On a few occasions, I have given up doing something because I thought too little of my ability.
4. There have been times when I felt like rebelling against people in authority even though I knew they were right.
5. No matter who I'm talking to, I'm always a good listener.
6. There have been occasions that I took advantage of someone.
7. I'm always willing to admit it when I make a mistake.
8. I sometimes try to get even rather than forgive and forget.
9. I am always courteous, even to people who are disagreeable.
10. I have never been irked when people expressed ideas very different from my own.
11. There have been times when I was quite jealous of the good fortune of others.
12. I am sometimes irritated by people who ask favors of me.
13. I have never deliberately said something that hurt someone's feelings.

Appendix H

Debriefing Form

Thank you for participating in this study. We appreciate your time and honesty when answering the questions. The purpose of this study was to learn more about the attitudes and opinions of students in relation to the acceptability of **micro-aggressive behaviors** (defined as subtle, stunning, often automatic and non-verbal "put-downs" exchanged between two different groups). Specifically, researchers were interested in assessing whether or not an individual's awareness, remorse, willingness to confront, and the anticipated costs of addressing their **White privilege** (unearned advantages of being White in a racially stratified society) could influence how individuals view the acceptability of microaggressions. Furthermore, researchers were also interested in whether or not one's **propensity to make attributions to prejudice** will also influence the acceptability of racial microaggressions.

If you have any questions about this project or your rights as a participant in this project, please contact:

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Crisis Text Line
24/7 Crisis Support
Text CONNECT to 741741

Thank you again for your participation.

Appendix I

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IRB Approval Letter

</div>

FORT HAYS STATE
UNIVERSITY

Forward thinking. World ready.

OFFICE OF SCHOLARSHIP AND SPONSORED PROJECTS

DATE:

TO: FROM:

STUDY TITLE:
IRB REFERENCE #: SUBMISSION TYPE:

ACTION: DECISION DATE:

REVIEW CATEGORY:

March 8, 2019

Jordan Sparrow
Fort Hays State University IRB

[1407046-1] Attitudes, Preferences, and Acceptability Study 19-104
New Project

DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS March 8, 2019

Exemption category # 2

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this research study. The departmental human subjects research committee and/or the Fort Hays State University IRB/IRB Administrator has determined that this project is EXEMPT FROM IRB REVIEW according to federal regulations.

Please note that any changes to this study may result in a change in exempt status. Any changes must be submitted to the IRB for review prior to implementation. In the event of a change, please follow the Instructions for Revisions at http://www.fhsu.edu/academic/gradschl/irb/.

The IRB administrator should be notified of adverse events or circumstances that meet the definition of unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects. See http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/policy/AdvEvntGuid.htm.

We will put a copy of this correspondence on file in our office. Exempt studies are not subject to continuing review.

If you have any questions, please contact Leslie Paige at lpaige@fhsu.edu or 785-628-4349. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.

- 1 -

ABSTRACT

The current study investigated the relationship between White privilege (WP) awareness and the acceptability of racial microaggressions among majority group members. Based on prior research, three potential mediators (i.e., the willingness to confront WP), the anticipated costs of addressing WP, and WP remorse) and one moderator (i.e., one's propensity to make attributions to prejudice; PMAPS) were examined. A total of 202 participants were recruited from Amazon's Mechanical Turk. Efforts were made to recruit participants from each of the five regions of the United States (Midwest = 24.1%, Northeast = 24.6%, Southeast = 17.8%, Southwest = 14.1%, West = 19.4%) to reduce any potential sampling bias. An almost equal number of men (N =104) and women (N = 85) who identified as Caucasian completed the study. All participants were over the age of 18 and under the age of 65, with an average age of 36.76 (SD = 16.51). Participants completed the *White Privilege Attitudes Scale* (see Appendix E), the *Propensity to Make Attributions to Prejudice Scale* (see Appendix F), the *Acceptability of Racial Microaggressions Scale* (see Appendix D), and the *Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale* (see Appendix G).

Results suggest that WP awareness was negatively predictive of the acceptability of racial microaggressions among majority group members [$t(189)$ = -9.26, $p < .001$; β = -.56]. The costs associated with WP, the willingness to confront WP, and WP remorse were not found to be significant mediators. However, the PMAPS was a significant moderator [β = -.17; $t(189)$ = -2.804, $p < .001$]. This effect appeared to be the strongest when both WP awareness and PMAPS were high (t = -5.83) compared to low (t = -3.18). Overall, results from this study help to explain why and when majority group individuals might find racial microaggressions acceptable. This research may subsequently help to inform future research as well as potential programming

designed to decrease the prevalence of racial microaggressions with individual differences in

mind.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to take a moment to thank the members of my committee for taking time out of their schedules to lend their knowledge and experience to this project. Their input was invaluable throughout this process. Above and beyond, I would like to thank my advisor and mentor, Dr. Whitney Whitaker. Her steadfast support, encouragement, and patience throughout the writing process. I will never be able to express my appreciation and gratitude.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF APPENDICES

INTRODUCTION

Racial prejudice and discrimination are pervasive societal issues in the United States and can have serious negative implications for a variety of individuals (Oswald, Mitchell, Blanton, Jaccard, & Tetlock, 2013). Many examples of the pervasive nature of prejudice and discrimination can be found in today's popular culture. For instance, in early 2018, the rap artist Childish Gambino released his song *This is America*, which highlighted racial disparities and discriminatory behaviors that seem to be engrained in American culture. Primarily, the song describes racism, discrimination, and violence perpetrated by police and other entities that African Americans experience throughout their lives. This song (and associated music video) not only highlight that prejudice and discrimination remain widespread in the United States, but also suggests that racist attitudes and behaviors appear to be accepted as group or social norms in United States society. The Childish Gambino is not the first artist to acknowledge these important societal issues relevant to prejudice and discrimination in the United States. In 2014, Ryan Macklemore publicly apologized to artist Kendrick Lamar after winning the best new artist Grammy. Macklemore claimed that Lamar, a Black man, had been robbed of recognition due to his race. Macklemore also publicly acknowledge how his status as a White man had given him unearned advantages in the music industry (Conway, Lipsey, Pogge, & Ratliff, 2017). This act on behalf of Macklemore calls attention to factors and systems in place that contribute to racist attitudes and behaviors.

Importantly, empirical evidence focusing on the impact of prejudice and discrimination has been on the rise over the past three decades; however, more research is needed to better understand and manage this phenomenon. The current study primarily focused on factors that might contribute to and explain the acceptability of prejudice and discrimination in the United

States. Prior research and theory will be discussed below in detail regarding the evolution of

prejudice and discrimination as well as variables that might influence its acceptability. Overall,

this prior research will help to inform and guide the goals and expected outcomes of the current

study.

Prior Research and Theory: Evolution of Prejudice and Discrimination

Research commonly defines prejudice as a negative evaluation of an individual or a

group of individuals on the sole basis of their group membership (Crandall, Eshleman &

O'Brian, 2002). These negative evaluations towards others are often based on inaccurate

information rooted in stereotypes (i.e., generalized beliefs about others, namely due to group

membership/affiliation) developed through generations. As negative evaluations of another

develop, a certain attitude or affect also emerges that might form the basis of prejudice; as such,

it is common to see prejudice cited in prior research as more of an attitude or evaluation of others

that can be biased (Saucier, Miller, & Doucet, 2005). For example, possessing an attitude(s) that

individuals who live in a particular part of town are dangerous or untrustworthy due to a few

cases of crime in the area, could lead to the formation of a stereotype (that serves to solidify a

prejudiced attitude) that all individuals who live in that part of town are dangerous criminals.

In comparison, racial discrimination refers more to the behavioral component of racism.

This includes a majority racial group member's actions that have negative effects on minority

racial-ethnic individuals (Williams, Neighbors, & Jackson, 2003). Discrimination can manifest in

a variety of ways; a major category, important for the current study, focuses on the formation of

negative attitudes (i.e., prejudice) and subsequent behaviors (i.e., discrimination) that White

individuals display towards minority group members. Importantly, previous research suggests

that holding a prejudicial attitude may potentially lead to acts of discrimination (Crandall et al.,

2002).

Given that prejudicial attitudes can subsequently lead to discriminatory behaviors, current

research has focused on the nature of prejudice and discrimination changing as a function of our

society (Sue, Capodilupo, & Holder, 2008). Blatant racist attitudes that were seen acceptable

decades ago (i.e., viewing minority members as second-class citizens) and the accompanying

behaviors (i.e., segregated schools) have now become less acceptable to our society as a whole.

In other words, blatant and overt expressions of prejudice and discrimination have become less

acceptable in United States' society due to their outward displays of aggression and unfairness

towards minority groups. However, this research suggests that the decrease in social

acceptability of blatant racist acts does not mean that prejudice and discrimination are not present

currently in society. Rather, expressions have evolved, the same way that societal expectations

and norms have evolved over time.

Overt prejudice and discrimination have been deeply rooted parts of United States'

society for generations. The Jim Crow caste system rose immediately after the abolition of

slavery in 1877, and effectively categorized minority groups as second-class citizens until the

rise of Affirmative Action in the mid 1960's (Alexander, 2012). Throughout this time period the

segregation of schools, housing and workforces, along with extreme pay gaps were a common

practice throughout the country. In more extreme cases, involving the Ku Klux Klan, mob

violence, bombings, and public lynching's of racial minorities were common examples of overt

discrimination and racism. These overt, outward forms of prejudice and discrimination continued

to dominate society as favorable acts until the first Affirmative Action law was introduced by

President John F. Kennedy in 1963 (Alexander, 2012). Affirmative Action set in motion what

later became known as the Civil Rights Movement, which began to recognize racial minorities as more than second class citizens. This led to the desegregation of communities, the right to vote, equal chances for employment opportunities, among other inclusive acts. Soon, overt acts of prejudice and discrimination became less favorable in the eyes of society.

Relevant to this societal shift, Sheirf and Sheirf's (1953) Group Norm Theory suggests that attitudes, values, beliefs and prejudices are all acquired as part of the socialization process. Thus, the development of prejudice-related norms (i.e., segregation and/or lynching) occur within social groups. These prejudice-related norms pressure individuals to conform to overall group norms. When prejudices are viewed as norms within society, individuals are more likely to develop and share the same prejudices (Crandall et al., 2002). Overt forms of racism were viewed as the overall group or societal norm in the United States until the rise of Affirmative Action. This new push of inclusivity changed the overall societal norms and made overt acts of prejudice and discrimination unfavorable. However, the shift in social norms did not eliminate prejudice or discrimination, but merely changed how it was expressed (Poteat & Spainerman, 2012). As such, researchers use the term *modern racism* now to describe the evolved expressions of prejudice and discrimination.

Modern racism involves more subtle expressions of discrimination when compared to the "old-fashioned" racism of the past (McConohay, 1986). In general, this subtle form of discrimination is still intended to belittle, offend, and/or discriminate against minority groups (McConohay, 1986). For example, expressing to a minority individual that they insert themselves in places that they should not be (i.e., leaders of organizations; positions of power) with the intent to insult the abilities of the individual can be considered a form of modern racism. Although in general modern racism is still considered to be intentional, more recent research has

begun to examine non-intentional forms of modern racism. More specifically, any statement or

act that might not be intended to offend and/or be derogatory (and in some cases may be viewed

as a compliment or praise by the perpetrator) but still communicates and upholds aspects of

prejudice and discrimination (Pfeifer & Bernstein, 2003; Tarman & Sears, 2005).

With the evolution of prejudice and discrimination in mind, as well as the detrimental

impact of these attitudes and behaviors, the main purpose of the current study is to expand on

prior research to further explore forms of modern racism. More recent research (within the last

decade) cites racial microaggressions as a form of modern racism (Sue et al., 2007); however, in

comparison to modern racism, limited empirical research has explored the usage and

acceptability of microaggressions. In addition, research investigating factors that might predict

the usage of racial microaggressions is limited. The current study seeks to fill a gap in prior

research by assessing the acceptability of racial microaggressions as well as factors, such as

White privilege and the propensity to make attributions to prejudice that might enhance our

understanding of when and why microaggressions are used. To better understand the theoretical

underpinnings of the current study, research regarding microaggressions, White privilege, and

the propensity to make attributions to prejudice will be reviewed.

Microaggressions: Relevant Research and Findings

Microaggressions are considered a form of modern racism and include subtle, stunning

and often automatic "put-downs." Racial microaggressions tend to be verbal, behavioral, or

environmental indignities (intentional or unintentional) that communicate hostile, derogatory, or

negative racial slights or insults towards people of color (Sue et al., 2007). For instance, a White

individual who says to a minority group member "you're a credit to your race" may not be

intended to communicate a derogatory message and may be perceived by the perpetrator as a

genuine compliment, however, the underlying meaning of this statement conveys a message that the minority member is not as intelligent as a majority group member. Further, a statement such as, "I'm not racist, I have several black friends" may not be intended to be offensive but does in fact communicate the message that a majority group member is immune to racism because this person has friends of color. These two examples help to highlight the potential for racist and discriminatory statements/acts to be unintentionally harmful. Although just two examples, previous literature has found three main types of micro-aggressive statements and behaviors, categorizing them based on the intensity and intent behind the statement. These types include microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations.

      Types of microaggressions. Microassaults are similar to "old fashioned" or overt racism, or comments/attitudes that are intended to harm another individual. Microassaults tend to be expressed in a private or "micro" situation, where individuals are able to maintain a level of anonymity or safety. Since group norms now dictate these more overt expressions are no longer acceptable attitudes/ feelings, a level of anonymity allows individuals to express these microassaults without fear of repercussions. This type of microaggression is primarily characterized by varying degrees of conscious and deliberate verbal or nonverbal attacks with the intent to harm the victim[1] (Sue et al., 2007). Referring to and individual as "Oriental," and discouraging interracial interactions are common examples of microassaults. Though this type of microaggression is most likely to be a conscious statement, they are generally not expressed in a public capacity.

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[1] It is important to note that the term "victim" in this context has the potential to prime unintended negative mindsets and/or connotations. However, "victim" was selected (and retained for consistency purposes) based on a large body of prior prejudice and discrimination literature that utilizes this terminology.

Microinsults are characterized by statements that demean an individual's racial heritage or identity and are expressed by subtle snubs that are frequently unknown to the perpetrator (Sue et al., 2007). These can be conveyed in both a verbal and nonverbal manner, depending on the context of the situation. Microinsults may not be meant as an aggression towards minority groups but the context in which they occur are important. For instance, these forms of microaggressions may occur in situations where a White individual asks an employee of color how they got their job, or when a White teacher favors a White student over a minority student based solely on race/ethnicity. Although these are not outward displays of aggression, the hidden messages communicate that minority groups are less qualified, and their contributions are unimportant. Microinvalidations exclude or reject the psychological thoughts, feelings, and/or experiences of a person of color (Sue et al., 2007).

Microinvalidations tend to be unconscious in nature and could potentially be seen as a genuine compliment by the perpetrator. When a White individual compliment's a minority individual on their ability to speak English, even though they were born and raised in the United States, the perpetrator may be genuine in their compliment but are suggesting that the minority member is a perpetual foreigner. Similarly, when a White individual says, "there is only one race, the human race," this person is negating racial and cultural experiences of minority members. The examples above indicate the differing levels of intensity and intent that each type of microaggression expresses when it is being communicated to a minority individual. While it is important to recognize these differences, the overall impact of the different types of microaggressions on minority member's well-being is relatively similar.

Impact of microaggressions. Previous literature has focused on how the experience of microaggressions can have detrimental effects, such as decreased self-esteem as well as

increased stress, depression, and anxiety among minority groups (Wong-Padoongpatt, Zane, Okazaki, & Saw, 2017). In a 2017 study, researchers explored Asian American's experiences with racial microaggressions and how these experiences relate to both individual and collective self-esteem (Thai, Lyons, Lee, & Iwasaki, 2017). A significant negative relationship was found between the experiences of microaggressions and psychological well-being. Participants who reported experiencing more microaggressions in their daily lives reported lower levels of individual and collective self-esteem. In a similar study, Torres and Taknint (2015) examined how ethnic microaggressions impacted depression and stress in Latino individuals. Comparable to the previously mentioned study, individuals who experienced more microaggressions in their lives reported significantly higher levels of traumatic stress symptoms; which in turn were shown to be predictive of depression. A significant portion of the current literature has focused on how individuals experience microaggressions in a more generalized setting (Alvarez & Juang, 2010; Murphy-Shigematsu, 2010). This could include situations such as interactions in the grocery store or in a classroom setting. However, there are many professional settings in which microaggressions occur that could lead to more serious implications than just experiencing them in day-to-day life.

Hook and colleagues (2016) examined the occurrence of racial/ ethnic microaggressions in counseling sessions, and whether or not they contribute to poor counseling outcomes in racial/ ethnic minorities. A diverse sample of minority individuals (N= 2,212) were surveyed about their experiences with microaggressions within their counseling sessions (including frequency and impact). Researchers found the majority of clients (81%) reported experiencing at least one racial microaggression during their time in counseling. Clients reported experiencing microaggressions that centered around the lack of knowledge or awareness of bias and stereotypes regarding the

minority groups. Individuals also reported that therapists engaged in microaggressions by avoiding discussion around cultural differences, primarily when therapists were not the same race as the client. This study, along with the majority of the prior research that has been conducted, has focused on how these microaggressions impact and are perceived by minority groups (Sue et al., 2008; Wong-Padoongpatt et al., 2017). However, there is little research in comparison examining majority group members' perspectives regarding microaggressions; specifically, a limitation seems to exist in the literature regarding how majority group members view microaggressions and if these individuals understand and accept the messages that microaggressions communicate. Further, factors that might explain acceptability of microaggressions among majority group members is lacking.

Usage of microaggressions. While it is incredibly important to research and understand how minority individuals experience microaggressions and how microaggressions impact the overall functioning of minority individuals, there are very few studies that focus on how majority groups (White individuals) might understand their biases, how they might use microaggressions, and why they find these expressions to be acceptable. In a 2016 study, Mekawi, Bresin, and Hunter assessed whether White participants' fear of racial/ ethnic minorities was associated with racial shooting bias and if dehumanization moderated this effect. Participants were asked to complete a dehumanization implicit association test and a simulated shooting task (a computer program that allowed participants to respond to a potential shooter situation), then reported their fear of racial minorities. Results indicated that individuals who reported high levels of White fear had a lower threshold for the shooting of Black targets relative to White and East Asian targets. In other words, individuals who reported higher levels of fear towards racial/ethnic minorities were more likely to display a shooting bias (and shoot the target) towards Black targets

compared to targets that were White. Also, individuals who were high in White fear and high in dehumanization were significantly more liberal in their shooting thresholds for Black targets compared to White targets. When individuals fear racial/ethnic minorities and deny certain aspects of humanity to an out-group (e.g., equating members of the out-group to animals or objects), participants were more likely to shoot Black targets compared to other racial groups (Mekawi et al., 2017). While this study examines how the implicit biases that majority individuals may hold can potentially have devastating consequences, it is only a starting point for research on how majority groups understand and accept prejudices and subsequent discriminatory behaviors.

Mekawi and Todd (2018) expanded on the narrow literature focusing on the viewpoint of majority group members; they developed and validated a scale to measure attitudes about how acceptable it is for majority individuals to use microaggressions directed towards racial and ethnic minorities in interpersonal interactions. The *Acceptability of Racial Microaggressions Scale* (the ARMS, see Appendix D) is a 34-item scale with four distinct factors, including victim blaming, exoticizing, power evasion, and color evasion. These factors are differentially associated with prejudice and ideological social attitudes and can potentially identify patterns of acceptability. The victim blaming factor includes microaggressions that denigrate and blame racial and ethnic minority cultures for racial disparities. For example, this might constitute an individual making the statement that there will not be racial progress until racial minorities stop relying on handouts from the government. The exoticizing factor includes microaggressions that romanticize, sexualize, and glamorize the bodies of racial and ethnic minorities. These could include statements like, "Native Americans are so fierce" or "you're so beautiful, you're like a geisha." Power evasion encompasses microaggressions that deny the role of racism in racial

disparities. Examples include: "everyone is treated the same by the legal system" and "everyone has access to the same educational opportunities, regardless of race or ethnicity." The final factor represents color evasion or minimizing or denying race. For example, this might include statements like, "there is only one race, the human race" or "even if we look different, we are basically the same." Important for the current study, this was the first scale to combine several different aspects that are frequently discussed in microaggression research (i.e., modern racism, color-blindness, and social dominance orientation) and develop a set of questions to assess how acceptable individuals believe it would be for a White individual to use these statements and behaviors among a racially diverse group.

To further validate the ARMS (see Appendix D), researchers administered the scale to participants, as well as asked how likely they would be to openly disagree with someone saying such statements (Mekawi & Todd, 2018). Results showed that the more individuals believed that the statements were acceptable, the more they believed they would use the microaggressions in the future. Similarly, the more participants found the statements to be unacceptable, they reported being more willing to openly disagree with the perpetrator. However, the association was the lowest for the power evasion factor. Thus, even though participants believed statements that deny the role of racism in legal disparities were unacceptable, they were less likely to openly disagree with a perpetrator on these statements. While this scale measures the acceptability of saying microaggressions rather than actual commission, it is one of the first to address the lack of research focusing on perspective of majority group members regarding microaggressions.

With prior research examining microaggressions from the perspective of both a victim and perpetrator in mind, the current study seeks to fill gaps in prior literature through a focus on perpetrators. More specifically, expanding on prior research to examine why majority group

members might use and find microaggressions acceptable along with identifying if any other factors could potentially influence this acceptability. One such factor that could influence acceptability of racial microaggressions is an individual's White privilege. In addition, an individuals' propensity to make attributions to prejudice may serve as a factor that can explain perceptions of racial microaggression acceptability among majority group members.

Factors Influencing the Acceptability of Microaggressions

White privilege. Previous research has defined White privilege (WP) as unearned advantages of being White in a racially stratified society (such as the United States) and is characterized as an expression of institutional power that is largely unacknowledged by most White individuals (Pinterits, Poteat, & Spainerman, 2009). McIntosh (1988) suggests that White individuals are carefully taught not to recognize their WP and therefore much of the oppression that comes from WP is actually unconscious. Potential advantages of WP could include having a lower chance to be the victims of police brutality or random drug stops, better access to healthcare, and have a greater chance of being hired for a position based solely on the color of their skin (Conway et al., 2017). Many of these advantages are easily taken for granted or are not always recognized by White individuals because they may have never been in a situation that has challenged their place in society. As such, examples like Ryan Macklemore's attempt to note his White privilege and unearned advantages in the music industry might be rare.

It is important to note that many of these privileges are inherent due to the long history of White power in the United States, stemming from the racial caste system that was dominant in the early United States (Liu, 2017). Similar to how prejudice and discrimination are learned and shared by the socialization process, WP has been transferred in the same fashion and might be explained by the same Group Norm Theory (Sheirf & Sheirf, 1953). Based on this theory, values

and beliefs surrounding WP are dictated by an individual's social group. Liu (2017) suggests that most individuals do not acknowledge they have the privileges in which they do because the privileges (e.g., social class and/or favorable treatment by law enforcement) have been passed down through the generations without being challenged by society as a whole. In the past several decades, the concept of WP has received an increase in conceptual and empirical attention, however, important to the current study, attitudes associated with WP remain understudied (Conway et al., 2017).

Due to the long history of majority individuals being unaware of their WP, there is a wide range of potential attitudes/reactions that White individuals might express in response to their privilege. Pinterits et al. (2009) suggested that there are three distinct dimensions that are associated with the attitudes surrounding WP, the affective dimension, the cognitive dimension, and the behavioral dimension. The affective dimension encompasses emotional responses associated with WP. Previous literature notes that common affective responses can include: fear (e.g., possible downward mobility in the absence of race-based advantages), guilt (e.g., feelings of guilt for having unearned advantages in society), and anger (e.g., defensive response coupled with the denial of White privilege; Neville et al., 2000; Powell, Branscombe, & Schmitt, 2005; Spainerman et al., 2008). Cognitive dimensions of WP attitudes focus on the continuum of one's awareness of WP, ranging from the denial of WP to critical consciousness (e.g., accepting responsibility for change at both personal and institutional levels; Pinterest et al., 2009). The behavioral reactions to WP focus on individual's intentions and actions associated with this privilege. These actions/intentions range from apathy (e.g., disinterest in discussions or other learning opportunities) to actions that work towards dismantling WP. Based on this multidimensional conceptualization of WP attitudes, Pinterest and colleagues (2009) developed

the *White Privilege Attitudes Scale* (see Appendix E) that integrates the affective, cognitive and

behavioral dimensions to assess White individuals' attitudes towards WP.

The *White Privilege Attitudes Scale* (see Appendix E) consists of four interrelated but

conceptually distinct subscales; including the willingness to confront WP, anticipated costs of

addressing WP, WP awareness, and WP remorse. The willingness to confront WP reflects a

behavioral dimension in its assessment of intentions to address WP (Pinterest et al., 2009). Items

relate to participants' plan(s) to address WP present in society (e.g., I plan to work to change our

unfair social structure that promotes WP) and their willingness to explore their own WP (e.g., I

am eager to find out more about letting go of WP). The anticipated costs of addressing WP

reflect a mixture of the affective dimensions that are linked with potential behaviors associated

with the fear of addressing or losing one's WP. This factor includes items that reflect a degree of

trepidation about addressing WP (e.g., If I address White privilege, I might alienate my family)

or about the potential of losing one's own privilege (e.g., I worry about what giving up some WP

might mean for me). WP awareness is composed of items that represent the cognitive dimension

of WP attitudes. These items reflect the degrees of consciousness and understanding of WP and

racial inequities in the United States' society (e.g., Plenty of people of color are more privileged

than Whites). WP remorse reflects the affective dimension of WP and measures the emotional

responses (e.g., shame and anger) about having race-based privileges (e.g., White people should

feel guilty about having WP). Important for the current study, these four factors associated with

WP attitudes could potentially impact the acceptability of using racial microaggressions. For

example, WP awareness (a cognitive dimension) might predict the acceptability of using racial

microaggressions among majority group members; the more aware a White individual is of their

privilege, the less likely this individual might be to accept the use of microaggressions. Although

being aware of WP might predict less acceptability of microaggressions, awareness might only

be the first step in this prediction. For example, a White individual could be aware of privilege,

however, if this person is unwilling to address that privilege and/or feels anxious about the

associated costs of addressing WP, then this person might endorse the acceptability and usage of

microaggressions. Overall, awareness (the cognitive dimension) alone might not predict less

acceptability. The behavioral and affective dimensions of WP also may serve to influence the

acceptability of microaggression usage, beyond awareness.

Prior research appears to support these assertions that the WP dimensions may be used to

predict the acceptability of using racial microaggressions. In a two-part study done by Conway

and colleagues (2017), researchers examined how an individual's racial prejudice relates to a

White individual's desire to learn or avoid information about WP. In study one, White

participants were asked to complete measures regarding their race attitudes (attitudes towards

both Black and White people) ranging from very cold to very warm, a modified version of the

White Privilege Attitudes Scale (desire to change WP; see Appendix E), and the *Information*

Avoidance Scale (desire to avoid information regarding WP). Results showed that both explicit

and implicit racial attitudes predicted the desire to change WP and the desire to avoid learning

information about WP. That is, when individuals preferred their own racial in-group compared to

out-groups (majority group compared to minority group), there was a stronger desire to avoid

learning about WP. When individuals reported warmer attitudes towards racial out-groups, there

was less desire to avoid additional information and greater desire to change WP.

In the second study, the same measures were used to assess race attitudes, a measure for

potential reasons for avoiding information about WP, and the same measure used in study one to

assess the desire to avoid additional information about WP. Results suggest that individual's

distrust in new information, perceived threats to a person's worldview, and external social pressures are consistent predictors to avoid additional information about WP and desire to change WP. Contrary to expected results, an anticipated negative affect predicted the desire to change WP. When individuals anticipated a greater negative outcome due to their WP, they were more willing to make a change to dismantle WP.

In a similar study, Boatright-Horowitz, Frazier, Harps-Logan, and Crockett (2013) explored if the exposure to McIntosh's (1988) list of White Privileges could lead to attitude changes about racism in White college students. College students in general psychology courses were given a pre-test to determine their attitudes towards racism and WP in the United States prior to being exposed to the list of White privileges. Participants were then asked to rate their level of agreement with items on McIntosh's White Privileges list. A post-test was used to assess whether exposure to the list of White privileges affected attitudes towards racism and privilege. Results indicate that White students showed significantly higher levels of agreement with the list of White privileges compared to minority students. White students also reported significantly higher levels of racism in the United States society today (i.e., modern racism) and if racism affected their own behavior after being exposed to the White privilege list. Similarly, admissions that they experienced WP, reports that other people are likely to view them as racist, and that White individuals in today's society can be viewed as racist increased significantly from the pre-test to the post-test. Overall, when individuals became more aware of the WP they experience within society, their attitudes towards modern racism and their own privileges shifted. These attitudes towards racism and WP may be influenced by other factors as well, such as the perceivers' own beliefs about the prevalence of racial prejudice and discrimination.

The research detailed above collectively supports the idea that an individual's awareness of WP has the potential to influence attitudes and behaviors. To expand the prior research, the current study aims to examine how an individual's awareness of WP could potentially lead to majority group members finding racial microaggressions less acceptable. However, it is anticipated that the behavioral and affective dimensions of WP also will influence this relationship.

Propensity to make attributions to prejudice. As social norms regarding overt forms of racism have evolved, becoming subtler and more ambiguous (i.e., modern racism, such as microaggressions), the likelihood that individuals are perceived as racist has decreased (Saucier et al., 2005). Due to the ambiguous nature of the expressions that are the current societal norms (i.e., application of Group Norm Theory), judgements about whether or not prejudice has been expressed have become difficult for others to perceive. A multitude of factors related to both the perceiver and the situation can potentially influence this judgement. Prior research has focused primarily on individual differences and situational factors affecting majority members attributions to prejudice (Wang, Stroebe, & Dovidio, 2012). Miller and Saucier (2018) looked to expand this literature by developing the *Propensity to Make Attributions to Prejudice Scale* (PMAPS; see Appendix F). The PMAPS is based on three key beliefs (described in detail below). However, overall the PMAPS serves as a measure of individual differences in majority group members' tendencies to make prejudice attributions; this scale measures how likely a majority group member is to not only recognize prejudice and discrimination, but also attribute this prejudice as a cause for a variety of situations.

The PMAPS consists of three key beliefs that contribute to an individual's tendency to make prejudice attributions: pervasiveness, vigilance, and trivialization. Individuals who may

hold beliefs that prejudice is common in today's society may be more likely to consider

prejudice as a possible explanation used to assert cause given certain situations. For example, if

an individual believes prejudice is a pervasive part of the United States society, then they are less

likely to endorse the statement, "there's only one race, the human race." Individuals who score

high on the PMAPS are more likely to rate this statement as prejudicial compared to individuals

who score low on the PMAPS.

In addition, individuals who tend to be more vigilant to environmental cues that may

indicate racial prejudice may have a greater tendency to see prejudice in their social world

(Miller & Saucier, 2018). Individuals who have become primed to be more vigilant in identifying

prejudice cues (exposure to some form of prejudice or discrimination), could be more likely to

make attributions to prejudice. The trivialization of minority groups' concerns, or the belief that

minorities unfairly claim that they are the victims of prejudice and discrimination can potentially

lead to a decreased tendency to make prejudice attributions (Miller & Saucier, 2018). This

trivialization is often used to justify negative attitudes towards racial minorities by denying that

discrimination occurs. For example, the statement, "race doesn't play a role in who gets pulled

over by the police" denies the racial profiling that occurs in the United States (Mekawi & Todd,

2018).

The PMAPS was the first scale to examine individual differences of majority group

members and third-party observers' attributions to prejudice. After the psychometric properties

of PMAPS were established, a fourth study was conducted to examine how the distribution of

individual differences in the tendency to make attributions to prejudice might vary among

different demographic groups. Consistent with prior research, results suggest that White men

were less likely to make attributions to prejudice (i.e., less likely to recognize

prejudice/racism/discrimination) compared to Black men and women, Hispanic men and women, and Asian men and women. White women also were less likely to make attributions to prejudice compared to minority individuals; however, White women were more likely to make attributions to prejudice compared to White men (Miller & Saucier, 2018). While there are differences between demographic groups, results suggest that since the tendency to make attributions to prejudice varies considerably within the groups, it is more of an individual difference rather than a disposition to any one social group. Important to the current study, individual differences in the propensity to make attributions to prejudice may serve as an additional factor that can explain the acceptability of racial microaggressions among majority group members.

Overview of the Current Study

Overall, a large body of prejudice and discrimination literature exists. This literature indicates that prejudice and discrimination have evolved over time to include more subtle expressions. This shift may be attributed to a change in societal norms, as indicated by the Group Norm Theory (Sheirf & Sheirf, 1953). As society has deemed overt, more traditional forms of racism to be unjust and unacceptable, the nature in which these expressions are displayed has evolved to be more consistent with societal expectations. Unfortunately, subtle forms of prejudice and discrimination (e.g., microaggressions) still have negative effects among those who experience them. As such, research designed to empirically examine these subtle forms of prejudice and discrimination are warranted. With prior research examining microaggressions in mind, the current study seeks to fill gaps in prior literature through a focus on perpetrators, those who use and accept racial microaggressions. More specifically, the current study will expand on prior research to examine why and when majority group members (i.e., perpetrators) might use and find microaggressions acceptable. Due to the pervasive nature of microaggressions, it is vital

to understand why and when microaggressions are utilized and accepted by majority groups. Doing so might lead to a better understanding of this phenomenon as well as potential programming created to decrease the frequency of microaggressions (Hook et al., 2016).

The current study will investigate the relationship between a majority group member's awareness towards WP and if this person believes that using racial microaggressions are acceptable. This relationship between WP awareness and acceptability of microaggressions stems from prior research that links more awareness to less prejudice and discrimination. In addition to WP awareness, three additional variables associated with WP (i.e., costs associated with WP, willingness to confront WP, and WP remorse) have been identified as mediators. These mediators may help to further explain why a majority group member finds microaggressions to be acceptable; although awareness of WP may predict the acceptability of microaggressions, the willingness to dismantle WP, the costs associated with WP, and WP remorse may further explain the underlying process of awareness and acceptability of microaggressions. Furthermore, one's PMAPS also will be examined. This variable will be measured as an individual difference, and as such, will be used as a moderator to further explain when WP awareness may predict the acceptability of microaggressions. The following hypotheses have been developed based on prior research and theory.

Hypotheses

The current study will test how majority group members' WP awareness, willingness to confront WP, anticipated costs of addressing WP, WP remorse, and the PMAPS relate to the acceptability of using racial microaggressions. The following hypotheses have been developed to test the relationships between these variables of interest as well as potential mediating and moderating effects.

Hypothesis one. First, we will assess the relationship between each variable of interest and the acceptability of using racial microaggressions. Based on past research, the awareness of WP is hypothesized to be significantly negatively correlated with the acceptability of racial microaggressions. In addition, a significant negative correlation is hypothesized between the willingness to confront WP and WP remorse in relation to the acceptability of racial microaggressions. A significant positive relationship is hypothesized between anticipated costs of addressing WP and the acceptability of using racial microaggressions. Finally, a significant negative correlation is anticipated with respect to the PMAPS and the acceptability of racial microaggressions.

Hypothesis two. If significant correlations are found between the variables of interest and the acceptability of using racial microaggressions, we will test for mediation effects. It is expected that although the awareness of WP may predict the acceptability of using racial microaggressions, the willingness to confront WP, WP remorse, and the costs of addressing WP will serve as full mediators.

Hypothesis three. An individual's PMAPS will be tested as a moderator. It is expected that awareness of WP will negatively predict the acceptability of using racial microaggressions; however, this negative prediction will be enhanced when accounting for an individual's PMAPS.

METHOD

Participants

Approximately 202 participants were recruited from the online survey administration system, Amazon's Mechanical Turk™. Efforts were made to recruit participants from each of the five regions of the United States (Midwest = 24.1%, Northeast = 24.6%, Southeast = 17.8%, Southwest = 14.1%, West = 19.4%; see table 1) to reduce any potential sampling bias.

Mechanical Turk is an online survey system that allows market researchers to test certain

products and/or ask survey questions. Participants, called Workers through this system, can see

surveys on their work dashboard and determine which study they choose to participate in from a

list of options. Participants/Workers are then paid for their participation in the study. To fill a gap

in prior research that has mainly focused on the impact of microaggressions when experienced

by minority group members, this study focused on Caucasian individuals. Efforts were made to

recruit an almost equal number of men (N =104) and women (N = 85) who identify as

Caucasian[2] (see table 2). Exclusions were made based on age to avoid sampling a protected

population; all participants were over the age of 18 and under the age of 65, with an average age

of 36.76 (SD = 16.51). About 50% of the sample indicated having a bachelor's degree (see table

3); and about 65% were employed full time (working 40 hours or more per week; see table 4).

All IRB procedures and APA ethical guidelines were followed.

Materials

   The White Privilege Attitudes Scale (WPAS). Participants completed the *White*

Privilege Attitudes Scale (Pinterits et al., 2009; see Appendix E) that consists of 28 questions

rated on a 6-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree; 6 = Strongly Agree). The 28 items

comprise four factors: willingness to confront WP (12-item behavioral measure; α = .95),

anticipated costs of addressing WP (six-item affective and behavioral measure; α = .81), WP

awareness (four-item cognitive measure; α = .84), and WP remorse (six-item affective measure;

α = .91). This scale has been found to be a reliable and valid measure; based on the Cronbach's

alpha scores listed above, the subscales used in the current study support the internal consistency

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[2] One participant self-identified as "other" when asked about gender. Analyses were conducted with and without this
participant included. Results (significance and patterns/trends) did not change, thus, we elected to include this
person in all analyses that follow.

of the scale. Participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with statements like "I accept responsibility to change White privilege; I am ashamed of my White privilege; If I were to speak up against White privilege, I fear losing my friends; Our social structure system promotes White privilege." Composite scores were created for each of the four subscales by averaging the items used to measure the WP awareness, willingness to confront WP, the anticipated costs of addressing WP, and WP remorse.

Propensity to Make Attributions to Prejudice (PMAPS). Participants completed the *Propensity to Make Attributions to Prejudice Scale* (Miller & Saucier, 2018; see Appendix F). The PMAPS consists of 15 questions rated on a 9-point Likert scale (1= Strongly Disagree; 9 = Strongly Agree). These 15 questions measure aspects relevant to how pervasive racial prejudice is (e.g., "people discriminate against people who are not like them"), trivialization of a targets' concerns about racism (e.g., "racial minorities are too sensitive about stereotypes"), vigilance in recognizing expressions of prejudice (e.g., "I think about why racial minorities are treated stereotypically"), and confidence in one's ability to recognize prejudice (e.g., "I am quick to recognize prejudice"). A composite score was calculated by averaging the items used to measure the propensity to make attributions to prejudice (α = .86).

Acceptability of Racial Microaggressions Scale (ARMS). Participants completed the *Acceptability of Racial Microaggressions* (Mekawi & Todd, 2018; see Appendix D), a 34-item survey asking participants to rate on a 6-point Likert type scale (1 = Totally Unacceptable; 6 = Perfectly Acceptable) how acceptable they believe it would be to say micro-aggressive statements to a racially diverse group of peers and/or engage in micro-aggressive behaviors. This 34-item scale measures things such as victim blaming (e.g., "African Americans would get more jobs if they dressed more professionally"), exoticizing (e.g., "You're so beautiful, you look like

Pocahontas"), power evasion (e.g., "When people get shot by the police, it is more about what they were doing rather than their race"), and color evasion (e.g., "People shouldn't see race anymore"). A composite score was calculated by averaging the items used to measure the acceptability of racial microaggressions (α = .95).

Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale- Short Form C. Given the sensitive nature of the questions above, participants also completed the *Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale - Short Form C* (Reynolds, 1982; see Appendix G). This is a 13-item questionnaire (α = .70) that measures participants tendencies to respond in a socially desirable way; items were rated on a 6-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree; 6 = Strongly Agree). Participants rated their level of agreement with statements such as, "It is sometimes hard for me to go on with my work if I am not encouraged; No matter who I'm talking to, I'm always a good listener; I sometimes feel resentful when I don't get my way; On a few occasions, I have given up doing something because I thought too little of my ability."

Demographics. Participants completed questions to assess age, sex, ethnicity, occupation, level of education, and geographic location in which they live (see Appendix C)

Procedure

Participants had the option to participate in this study by selecting it from a list of surveys offered on their Mechanical Turk worker accounts. First, participants read an informed consent statement (see Appendix B) and were informed that if they chose to continue with the study, they were providing their electronic consent. The informed consent detailed the nature of the study, indicated that the study was voluntary, and that responses were kept anonymous. Next, the participants completed an online version of the Stroop Task (see Appendix C). Previous literature indicates that individuals who have been cognitively loaded (i.e., participate in a

difficult cognitive task) respond in a more honest and less strategic fashion (Stodel, 2015). Once participants completed the Stroop task, they received three different numbers that corresponded with their congruent speed, incongruent speed, and overall Stroop score from the task. Participants were required to record their scores to move on with the survey. Next, they answered a series of demographic questions. Participants then completed the questionnaires detailed above in random order. Finally, participants were debriefed (see Appendix H) and provided with the contact information for the principle investigator and faculty advisor, as well as the department ethics chair and the university IRB. Payment was deposited into their Mechanical Turk worker accounts after the study was completed.

Design and Statistical Analysis

This study examined if a participant's awareness of WP predicts acceptability of racial microaggressions. The willingness to confront WP, the anticipated costs of addressing WP, and WP remorse were examined as potential mediators that may help to explain why awareness predicts the acceptability of racial microaggressions. Further, the PMAPS was used as an individual difference moderator. If found to be a significant moderator, the PMAPS may help to explain when WP awareness predicts acceptability of racial microaggressions.

Standard data cleaning procedures were utilized. The data were screened for missing data; twenty-two scores on the raw items used to calculate the composite scores were found to be missing at random, and as such, the average score for each raw item was inserted in place of the missing data. Participants who did not complete at least 10% of the survey were not used in the analyses. Individuals who also appeared to be answering in a socially desirable way or in a manner that indicated they may not be truthful when responding were not included in the analyses. Social desirability was determined based on responses to the *Marlowe- Crowne Social*

Desirability Scale (see Appendix G). With previous research in mind (Stodel, 2015), we created

a cut-off point of 1.5 standard deviations above the sample mean (M = 5.33) and below the

sample (M = 2.33). A total of 12 participants scored outside of the cut-off range. Overall, 190

participants were included in the analyses that follow. Examination of the boxplots for each

composite variable indicated no significant outliers. Examination of the histograms indicated that

the distribution shapes for each of the variables were normally distributed; skewness and kurtosis

were used as an additional measure of distribution. For each variable of interest, the skewness

and kurtosis values were within the acceptable range of -1 to 1 with skewness scores ranging

from -.77 — .11 and kurtosis ranging from -.92 — .60.

RESULTS

Test of Hypothesis One

A series of bivariate correlations were conducted. These correlations assessed the

relationships between the acceptability of racial microaggressions and the variables of interest.

As expected, the analyses revealed that the acceptability of racial microaggressions was

negatively correlated with the awareness of WP [r = -.56*; p* < .001], the willingness to confront

WP [r = -.26*; p* < .001], and the PMAPS [r = -.49; *p* < .001]. Further, the acceptability of racial

microaggressions was positively correlated to the anticipated costs of addressing WP [r = .31; *p*

< .001]. White privilege remorse was not significantly related to the acceptability of racial

microaggressions [r = -.08*; p* = .26], although the expected negative relationship was seen.

Test of Hypothesis Two

A series of mediation analyses were performed to test hypothesis two. Liner regressions

were used to test for mediation following the steps outlined by the Baron and Kenny (1986)

method for all variables of interest. First, a regression was performed using the awareness of WP

as a predictor and the acceptability of racial microaggressions as the criterion. A significant and negative β was found [$t(189) = -9.26$, $p < .001$; $\beta = -.56$]. Three separate mediation analyses then were conducted to test for mediation; the willingness to confront WP, WP remorse, and the anticipated costs of addressing WP were tested as mediators.

A regression was conducted between the awareness of WP (predictor) and the willingness to confront WP (criterion). A significant positive β emerged [$t(189) = 9.94$, $p < .001$; $R^2 = .34$; $\beta = .59$]. Next, the willingness to confront WP was used as the predictor and the acceptability of racial microaggressions was used as the criterion. A significant negative β was found [$t(189) = -3.66$, $p < .001$; $\beta = -.26$]. Finally, a regression was performed using the awareness of WP and the willingness to confront WP as predictors with the acceptability of racial microaggressions as the criterion. When controlling for the willingness to confront WP, there was still a significant negative β between awareness and the acceptability of racial microaggressions [$t(189) = -8.30$, $p < .001$; $R^2 = .32$; $\beta = -.62$]. Examining the result further, the β value did not decrease; however, the t value did decrease. This may suggest a slight partial mediation effect (see Figure 1).

A regression then was conducted between the awareness of WP (predictor) and WP remorse (criterion). A significant positive β emerged [$t(189) = 7.69$, $p < .001$; $\beta = .48$]. Remorse then was used as the predictor and the acceptability of racial microaggressions as the criterion; however, a significant β value was not found [$t(189) = -1.14$, $p = .26$; $\beta = -.08$]. Because this step was not satisfied using the Baron and Kenny method, we concluded that WP remorse was not a significant mediator as it did not predict acceptability of racial microaggression on its own. See Figure 2 for the full model.

A regression then was conducted between the awareness of WP (predictor) and the costs associated with addressing WP (criterion). A significant β did not emerge [$t(189) = -.36$, $p = .72$;

β = -.03]. Given this first step in the model was not satisfied (WP awareness was not predictive

of WP costs), we concluded that the costs associated with addressing WP was not a significant

mediator. See Figure 3 for the full model.

Test of Hypothesis Three

Finally, to test hypothesis three, a moderation analysis was performed to assess the

prediction of the acceptability of racial microaggressions (Y) from the awareness of WP

(predictor) and the PMAPS (moderator). There was a significant negative correlation between

the awareness of WP and PMAPS [r = .72; p < .001] which preliminarily indicated potential

issues with multicollinearity. To reduce any possible issues of multicollinearity, the awareness of

WP and PMAPS were centered. An interaction term using these centered variables was then

created.

A hierarchical regression was performed to evaluate whether the interaction between the

awareness of WP and PMAPS was predictive of the acceptability of racial microaggressions.

For step one of the regression, the centered awareness variable and centered PMAPS variable

were entered. The interaction term was entered in step two of the model. Overall, the regression

model was significant [F (3, 187) = 34.13, p < .001; R = .60; Adjusted R^2 = .34]. Together, the

awareness of WP and the PMAPS entered in step two of the model predicted an additional 3% of

the variance associated with the acceptability of racial microaggressions. Importantly, the

interaction of awareness and PMAPS was significant (β = -.17; t (189) = -2.804, p < .001).

Simple slopes analysis then was performed to assess the effect of WP awareness on the

acceptability of racial microaggressions at varying levels of the moderator (i.e., low and high

PMAPS). As expected, results suggest that high levels of WP awareness and PMAPS were

associated with less acceptability of racial microaggressions; this effect appears to be the

strongest when both awareness and PMAPS are high ($t = -5.83$) compared to low ($t = -3.18$). See

Figure 4.

DISCUSSION

The current study addressed gaps in prior literature by focusing on perpetrators, or

majority group members who may find racial microaggressions to be acceptable. More

specifically, the current study expanded on prior research and examined why and when majority

group members might find racial microaggressions acceptable. White privilege (WP) and the

Propensity to make attributions to prejudice (PMAPS) were chosen as factors that might mediate

and moderate this acceptability, respectively. These variables were selected based on prior

research connecting WP and attributions to potential prejudice and discrimination; however, to

our knowledge, these variables have yet to be tested in relation to the acceptability of racial

microaggressions among majority group members (Mekawi et al., 2016; Miller & Saucier, 2018;

Pinterits et al., 2009).

Hypothesis One

A series of bivariate correlations were conducted to determine if the variables of interest

were related to the acceptability of racial microaggressions. Overall, each variable of interest,

with the exception of WP remorse, was significantly related to the acceptability of racial

microaggressions in the expected direction; thus, we concluded that the findings mostly support

hypothesis one. With respect to awareness, results indicated that the acceptability of racial

microaggressions was both significant and negatively related to the awareness of WP. That is,

when individuals indicated high level of awareness with regard to WP they were less likely to

find the measured racial microaggressions to be acceptable. The awareness of WP reflects the

cognitive dimension associated with WP attitudes, including the consciousness and

understanding of WP and racial inequities in the United States' society (Pinterest et al., 2009).

Thus, when individuals report that they are aware that WP exists and that there are still racial

disparities present within society, they are also viewing statements that put-down a racial

minority group to be unacceptable to use. This is consistent with prior literature that indicates

when White college students are exposed to WP (or their awareness of WP is increased through

exposure) they are likely to report a greater willingness to attend campus organizations/events

that focus of reducing racism and/or racial microaggressions (Boatright-Horowitz et al., 2013).

This suggests that when the cognitive awareness of WP increases (or is present), individuals may

be more willing to engage in the behavioral steps needed to start reducing racism or increasing

positive racial interactions on college campuses.

In addition, the willingness to confront WP also was found to have a significant negative

relationship with the acceptability of racial microaggressions. The willingness to confront WP

reflects a behavioral dimension and the likelihood that an individual will not only address WP in

society, but also how likely they are to consider the meaning and consequences of their own

privilege (Pinterest et al., 2009). When individuals reported a high willingness to acknowledge

and confront WP, they also reported lower acceptability of racial microaggressions. This finding

is consistent with previous research by Knowles and colleagues (2014) that suggests that White

individuals become more likely to take actions to dismantle their WP (e.g., embrace policies and

behaviors aimed at reducing ingroup privilege) when they report high moral concerns for the past

treatment of racial minorities. Thus, when majority individuals believe that racial minorities have

been treated unfairly (e.g., workforce inequality, unfair ingroup policies, racial

microaggressions) based on the way our society is structured and the privileges afforded to some,

but not others, they tend to be more willing to take steps to dismantle future instances of WP (Knowles, Lowery, Chow, & Unzueta, 2014).

Further, there was a significant and positive relationship between the anticipated costs of addressing WP and the acceptability of racial microaggressions. When individuals reported that there are more costs associated with addressing WP (e.g., losing friends or family), they were more accepting of racial microaggressions. This finding may (in part) be explained by social dominance orientation. Based on the idea of a racially stratified society, or the extent to which one desires that their in-group is dominant/superior to out-groups, White individuals have been positioned at the top of the racial hierarchy since the birth of the United States in 1776 (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994). When confronted with potential costs of addressing the privileges that may be a result of this social hierarchy, majority group individuals may be more likely to endorse attitudes/beliefs that minority group individuals are second class citizens to maintain the benefits their privilege afford (Worthington, Navarro, Loewy, & Hart, 2008).

A significant relationship was not found between WP remorse and the acceptability of racial microaggressions. While no significant relationship was found (thus not fully supporting hypothesis one), the direction of the relationship was negative which was expected. When examining the mean value for this variable, we discovered that individuals reported being neutral in their WP remorse ($M = 3.5$ on a 5-point scale) in regards to the unearned advantages that their WP had given them in society; however, the sample did report racial microaggressions as being slightly unacceptable ($M = 3.4$ on a 5-point scale). Prior literature suggests that WP guilt (or remorse) can be infrequent and typically self-focused/ compensatory; remorse may be used in a way to make a White individual feel better and/or alleviate guilt that may result from WP (Iyer, Leach, & Pedersen, 2004). Given prior research that indicates remorse may be infrequent and/or

used in a manner that serves to make White individuals feel better about their own actions, we

believe that asking our participants to merely think about their unearned advantages may not be

enough to elicit an emotional response from individuals. Spanierman and Cabrera (2014) suggest

key factors of WP remorse are evoking accountability and the notion that White guilt is a

middle-class emotion and seen much less often among working-class individuals. Many of the

items on the WP remorse subscale did not specifically assess accountability specifically, making

it difficult to determine if the neutral remorse was the true attitude of participants and/or a

limitation of the measure. Furthermore, it is possible that the sample comprised part of the

working-class that may be unfamiliar with White guilt.

        Finally, there was a significant and negative correlation between the PMAPS and the

acceptability of racial microaggressions. The PMAPS is an individual difference measure that

assesses not only an individual's ability to recognize prejudice and discrimination, but also

attribute prejudice as a cause for a variety of situations. When individuals report that they are

highly keen to attribute prejudice as the cause of situations, they also find racial

microaggressions to be less acceptable. Prior research has primarily focused on individual

differences in third-party observer's tendencies to make (or not to make) attributions to prejudice

(Miller & Saucier, 2018). These results confirmed the existing literature that individuals do differ

in their tendencies to make attributions to prejudice and expanded this literature by suggesting

that these individual differences also are related to how acceptable individuals view racial

microaggressions.

Hypothesis Two

        A series mediation models were performed to determine if the willingness to confront

WP, the anticipated costs of addressing WP, and WP remorse would serve as full mediators for

the relationship between the awareness of WP and the acceptability of racial microaggressions.

Essentially, this hypothesis tested why individuals may or may not find racial microaggressions

to be acceptable. The analyses showed that these three variables did not serve as full mediators,

and as such, hypothesis two was not supported. These findings may suggest that the awareness of

WP is a more important factor than originally anticipated to explain why individuals may or may

not find racial microaggressions to be acceptable. Prior research suggests that there has been a

dramatic increase in support for the principles of equality in the US; however, although

Americans may acknowledge support for equality, the actual implementation of policies

designed to implement equality has not yet been fully recognized (Hurwitz & Peffley, 1992;

Tunch & Hughes, 2011). This may suggest that individuals are aware that there is a problem in

the United States that needs to be addressed. However, even though there is an awareness of

inequality, when it comes time to take behavioral action to start actual change, individuals may

fall short. These results are similar to the current study, which also discovered that the awareness

of WP is predictive of the acceptability of racial microaggressions, and contrary to the original

hypothesis, the more behavioral and affective components of WP (willingness to confront,

anticipated costs, and remorse) did not fully explain why the awareness was predictive.

An additional point to consider based on these findings is simply that the willingness to

confront WP, the anticipated costs of addressing WP, and WP remorse may not exist without the

awareness of WP. McIntosh (1988) suggests that White individuals are carefully taught not to

recognize their WP or are unaware of the existence of WP in the United States society. If a

White individual is not aware that they have unearned advantages that puts them ahead of a

minority individual in society, then they would not be cognitively aware that they should be

confronting this privilege, or that there are costs associated with giving up these privileges, or

that they should feel a sense of remorse or guilt for having these advantages. Overall, we

originally expected that awareness would be predictive of the acceptability of racial

microaggressions but would be driven by more behavioral and affective components (like

willingness to take action and feelings of remorse). Results of the current study, however,

suggest that awareness is an important factor to consider in the prediction of acceptability and

this prediction was not explained solely on behavioral and affective components of WP.

Hypothesis Three

A moderation analysis was performed to determine when individuals might find racial

microaggressions to be more/less acceptable. As expected, the results indicated that high levels

of WP awareness and PMAPS were associated with less acceptability of racial microaggressions.

This effect appears to be strongest when both the awareness of WP and PMAPS are high

compared to low. As mentioned above, the PMAPS serves as an individual difference measure of

majority groups' tendencies to recognize prejudice and discrimination and attribute prejudice as

the cause of a variety of situations (Miller & Saucier, 2018). When individuals report a high level

of the PMAPS, they are better equipped to recognize prejudice and discrimination as it happens

around them. When this individual difference is accompanied with a high awareness of WP (the

consciousness and understanding of WP and racial inequities) individuals are the least accepting

of racial microaggressions. Prior research suggests that when individuals were placed in

situations where they anticipated a prejudiced scenario occurring, they were more likely to report

concerns towards race relations after an interaction had occurred (Sawyer, Major, Casad,

Townsend, & Mendes, 2012). This finding is consistent with the current study that also found

when individuals are more attune/ more vigilant to prejudice in their daily lives and attribute this

prejudice to situational causes, they are less likely to accept racial microaggressions.

Furthermore, this finding is important as the current study is the first to our knowledge to use the

PMAPS as a moderator to WP awareness and the acceptability of racial microaggressions. As

mentioned above, prior literature has connected the increased awareness of WP to an increased

desire to attend events that are focused on decreasing racism/racial microaggressions (Boatright-

Horowitz et al., 2013). However, it is important to note that while individuals who report

extreme highs on the PMAPS scale may also tend to discount alternative, nonprejudicial

explanations (Miller, et al., 2018). That is, individuals who score on the extreme high may tend

to overly attribute prejudice as the cause of situations. With the findings of hypothesis three, a

possible explanation for when individuals are more likely to find racial microaggressions

unacceptable is when they are both high in their awareness of WP and their PMAPS.

Limitations and Future Research

Although the findings of this study further explain the relationships between the White

privilege and the acceptability of racial microaggressions, as well as explain when individuals

are the least likely to find racial microaggressions acceptable, it is important to note limitations

of the current research. First, an online version of the Stroop Task was used as a method to

reduce the chances of participants responding in a socially desirable way. Prior research suggests

that when individuals experience a high cognitive loading prior to answering questions, they may

be more likely to answer in an organic fashion (Stodel, 2015). Thus, when individuals feel as if

they are cognitively drained, they are less concerned with social desirability. This task required

participants to read color words that are written in different color ink and report the color in

which the word is written in as fast as they can.

Using this method, participants were required to participate in an online version of the

Stroop task. A link was provided at the beginning of the survey that brought participants into a

separate page where they completed the task, and were given congruent (milliseconds it took to

respond when the color word was written in the same ink), incongruent (milliseconds it took to

respond when the color word was written in different colored ink) and an overall Stroop effect

(congruent score subtracted by the incongruent score). Participants were required to enter their

congruent, incongruent, and their Stroop effect scores to SurveyMonkey before they were able to

proceed to the next question. In past literature, the Stroop task was administered concurrently

with the survey questions in a lab setting and the response speed was not timed by the

administrator (Soutschek, Strobach, Schubert, 2013). Due to the online nature of the Stroop task

used in this study, there is no way to determine if participants accurately completed the task and

if it had the desired effect of reducing social desirability responses. Along with this, we are

unaware if the use of this task altered the responses to study in any other way. It is important to

note though that we also used a measure of social desirability (the Marlowe-Crowne; see

Appendix G), and we were able to remove participants from the sample that appeared to be

responding in a socially desirable way. Future research might consider using the Stroop task if a

similar study is conducted in lab-based setting and the task can be monitored in person as well as

consider how to better monitor the task if an online survey format is used.

Second, results of current study indicate that there was not a significant relationship

between WP remorse and the acceptability of racial microaggressions. While a validated

measure was used to assess levels of WP remorse, previous research suggests that a key factor of

WP remorse is to evoke accountability for the privileges that White individuals have within

society (Spainerman et al, 2014). Many of the items on the WP remorse subscale did not assess

accountability specifically, therefore future research might benefit from adding items that assess

accountability and prime feelings of remorse. Further, WP remorse is cited as being a middle-

class emotion and is seen much less often in working class individuals (Spanierman et al., 2014). Participants in the current study may have been part of the working-class, and as such, may not have been as familiar with the WP remorse. Future research should consider this with recruited participants.

Finally, the current study focused on the factors of WP and the PMAPS as variables that might impact the acceptability of racial microaggressions. However, there are other potential variables that might impact this acceptability that should be considered for future research. For example, in the current study efforts were made to recruit participants from each of the five regions of the United States. Yet, when analyses were run to explore how the acceptability of racial microaggressions varied as a function of location, no differences were observed. The lack of differences could be explained by how the areas of the United States were measured or grouped into the Midwest, Northeast, Southeast, Southwest, and West. Perhaps future research might benefit from a more targeted measure as groupings like the "Midwest" can be a more general way to assess geographic location. Future research also might use this variable of geographic location to predict acceptability and how WP awareness (which was found to be one of the most important variables of the current study) and PMAPS may vary based on location.

Despite these limitations, this research provides information on the relationship between the four factors of WP (willingness to confront WP, the anticipated costs of addressing WP, WP awareness, and WP remorse), the PMAPS, and the acceptability of racial microaggressions. White individuals are especially important to focus on in regard to racial microaggressions research as they are the least likely to experience a microaggression and the most likely to be a perpetrator of one (Miller et al., 2018). Therefore, focusing on why and when they may find microaggressions acceptable is an important addition to the prior literature. Although some

findings of the current study were non-significant, results did indicate that the more aware an

individual is of their WP the less acceptable they find racial microaggressions. Also, the results

of the current study suggest that individuals are the least likely to accept racial microaggressions

when they are high in both their awareness of WP and their PMAPS. Overall, more research is

needed to better understand why individuals might find racial microaggressions acceptable,

beyond the awareness of WP and PMAPS. However, the results of the current study, in

combination with prior research, provide preliminary support that continued research on this

topic is important.

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TABLES

Table 1

Region of Residence

Region	Frequency	%
Midwest	46	24.1
Northeast	47	24.6
Southeast	34	17.8
Southwest	27	14.1
West	37	19.4
Total	191	100

Table 2

Reported Sex

Sex	Frequency	%
Male	104	54.5
Female	85	44.5
Other	1	.5
Total	191	100

Table 3

Education Level

Level of Education	Frequency	%
No Schooling	1	.5
High School Graduate/ GED	20	10.5
Trade/ Technical/ Vocational Training	6	3.1
Some College Credit, No Degree	26	13.6
Associate's degree (e.g., AA, AS)	10	5.2
Bachelor's Degree (e.g., BA, BS)	96	50.3
Master's Degree (e.g., MA, MS)	29	15.2
Professional Degree (e.g., MD, DDS, DVM)	1	.5
Doctoral Degree (e.g., PhD, EdD)	1	.5
Total	190	99.5

Table 4

Employment Status

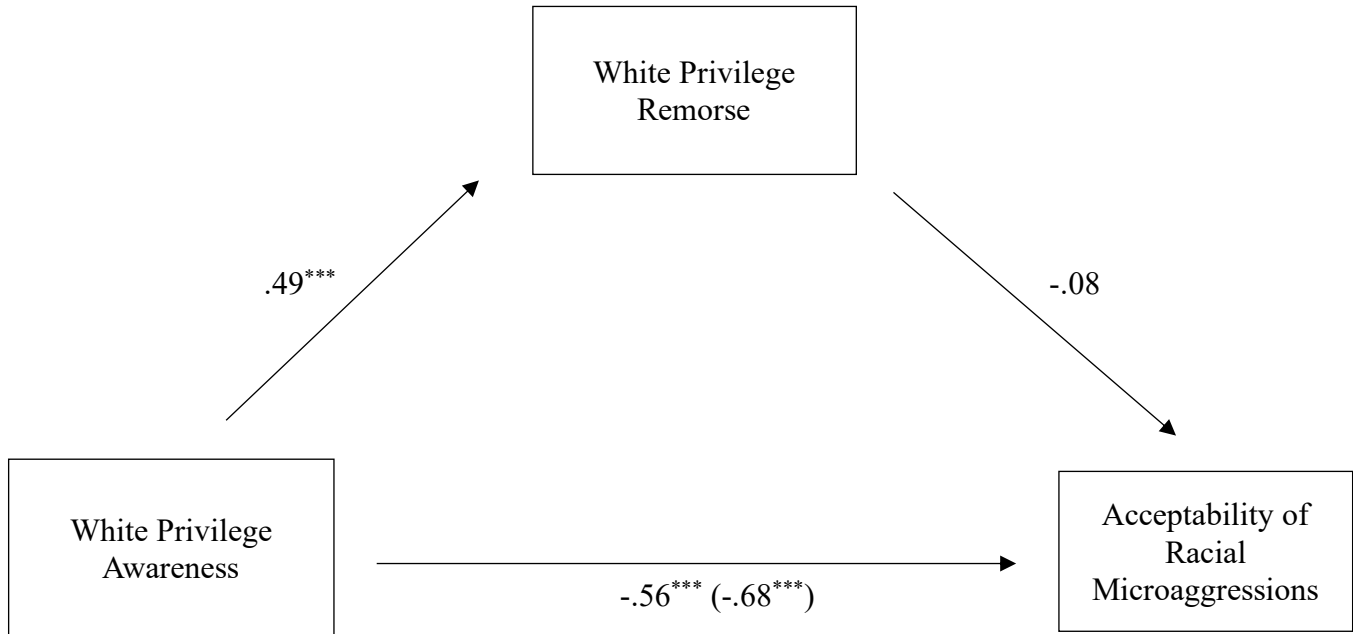| Employment Status	Frequency	%
Employed Full Time (40 or more hours per week)	125	65.4
Employed Part time (up to 39 hours per week)	21	11.0
Unemployed and currently looking for work	7	3.7
Unemployed not currently looking for work	2	1.0
Student	5	2.6
Retired	4	2.1
Homemaker	10	5.2
Self-employed	14	7.3
Unable to work	1	.5
Total	189	99.0

FIGURES

Figure 1. Standardized regression coefficients for the relationship between White privilege awareness and the acceptability of racial microaggressions as mediated by the willingness to confront White privilege. The standardized regression coefficient between White privilege awareness and the acceptability of racial microaggressions, controlling for the willingness to confront White privilege, is in parentheses. ***$p < .001$.

Figure 2. Standardized regression coefficients for the relationship between White privilege awareness and the acceptability of racial microaggressions as mediated by White privilege remorse. ***p* < .001.
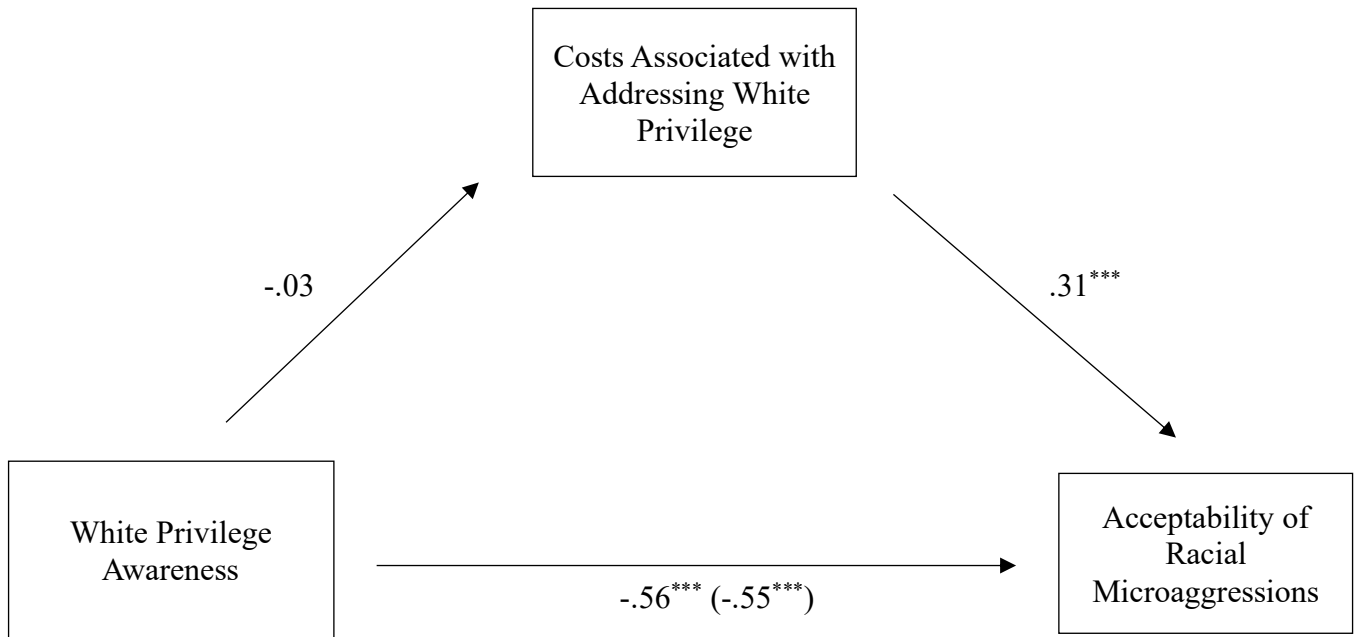
Figure 3. Standardized regression coefficients for the relationship between White privilege awareness and the acceptability of racial microaggressions as mediated by the anticipated costs of addressing White privilege. $^{***}p < .001$.
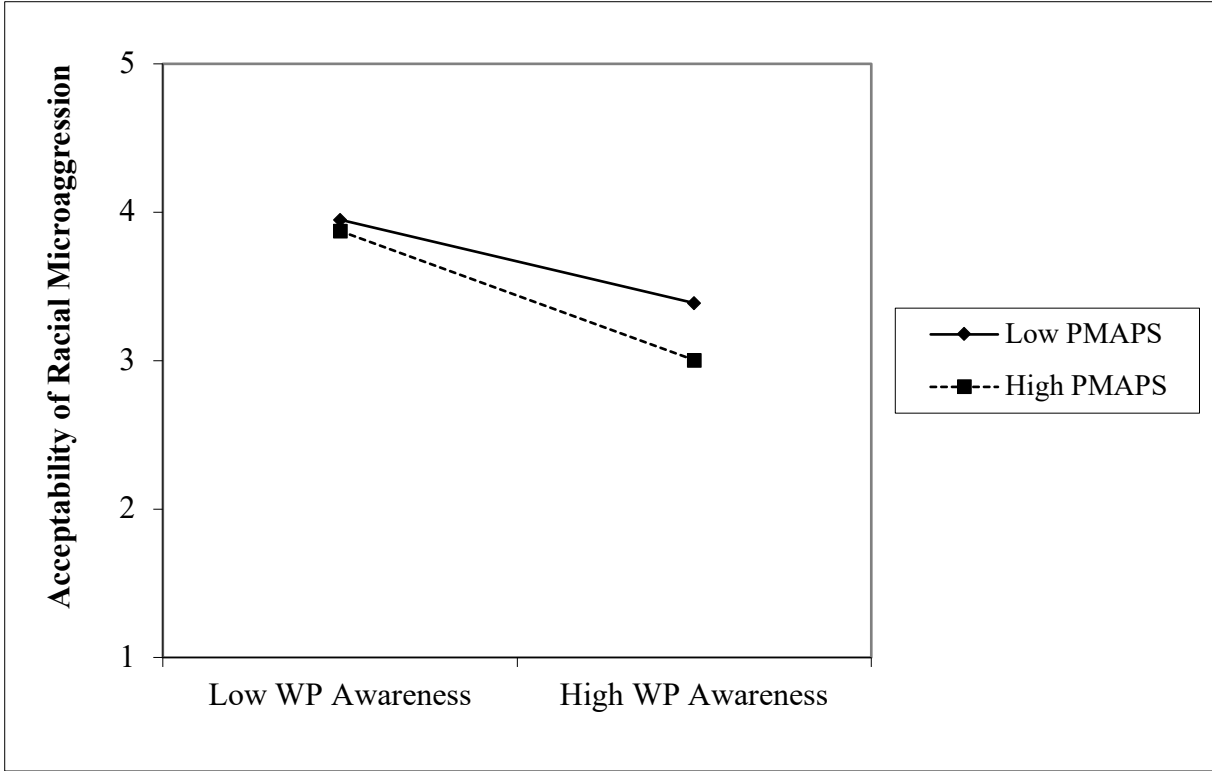
Figure 4. Simple slope analysis of the awareness of WP and the acceptability of racial microaggressions moderated by the PMAPS.

Appendix A
Recruitment Message

Hello. My name is Jordan Sparrow and I am a graduate student in the Psychology Department at Fort Hays State University in Hays, KS. I would like to invite you to participate in a research experiment. The purpose of our experiment is to examine individual's views towards groups they may or may not be a part of and how privileges may play a role in forming opinions. If you choose to participate, you will be given a survey to fill out asking questions about your behaviors and attitudes towards groups that you may or may not be a part of. You will be compensated $0.50 for your time and participation in this study. I would appreciate your help with this research project. If you would like to participate you will be asked to fill out a consent form related to the study. You will then be asked to complete a survey. If you choose to participate, the study will take approximately 20-30 minutes. If you have any questions about the study and/or would like more information about the study before making a decision to participate, please contact me (Jordan Sparrow) or my faculty adviser (Dr. Whitney Whitaker).

Thank you!

Jordan Sparrow
jasparrow@mail.fhsu.edu

Dr. Whitney Whitaker
wkwhitaker@fhsu.edu

Appendix B
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH
Department of Psychology, Fort Hays State University

Study title: Attitudes, Preferences, and Acceptability Study

Name of Researchers: Jordan Sparrow
Contact Information: jasparrow@mail.fhsu.edu
Name of Faculty Supervisor & Contact Information: Dr. Whitney Whitaker
(wkwhitaker@fhsu.edu)

You are being asked to participate in a <u>research study</u>. It is your choice whether or not to participate. Your decision whether or not to participate will have no effect on you.

<u>What is the purpose of this study?</u>
The purpose of our experiment is to examine individual's views towards groups they may or may not be a part of. Furthermore, we are interested in examining what factors might potentially influence attitudes and behaviors towards others.

<u>What does this study involve?</u>
If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked you will answer several demographic questions about yourself and to complete survey questions about your attitudes towards the acceptability of using statements in groups. You will not be required to provide your name or any other identifying information. If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to click continue to indicate your given consent. After completing the survey, you will be given a debriefing statement. The length of time of your participation is approximately 20-30 minutes. Approximately 200 participants will be in this study.

<u>Are there any benefits from participating in this study?</u>
This research could be used to educate individuals of how our attitudes and behaviors may impact others, as well as how the potential privileges you may or may not have could influence these attitudes and behaviors.

<u>Will you be paid or receive anything to participate in this study?</u>
Participants will be compensated with $0.50 for their time and participation in the study.

<u>What about the costs of this study?</u>
There are no costs for participating in this study other than the time you will spend completing the surveys.

<u>What are the risks involved with being enrolled in this study?</u>
It is unlikely that participation in this project will result in harm to participants. It is unlikely that you are at risk for psychological, physical, social harm or any risk that is more than minimal. However, survey questions included in this study may be distressing

to some participants. Participants may skip any questions they do not feel comfortable answering and may withdraw from the study at any point without penalty. You may contact the researcher, faculty supervisor, and/or the Office of Scholarship and Sponsored Projects. Please see below for contact information for these resources.

How will your privacy be protected?
No names or identifying information will be asked. Your data will be identified by an ID number that will not be associated with your name. This data is collected only for research purposes. Data files which do not contain your identifying information will be kept in electronic format. Responses to survey questions will be entered into a computer program and stored for 3 years, after which the data will be deleted. Only the student researcher and faculty advisor will have access to the database. Results of the survey will be shared with the scientific community through presentation and possible publication. When results are shared, information will be presented in aggregate form and will contain no names or identifying information.

Other important items you should know:
• **Withdrawal from the study:** You may choose to stop your participation in this study at any time without penalty. If you chose to do so, please exit out of the internet window.
• **Funding:** There is no outside funding for this research project.

Whom should you call with questions about this study?
Questions about this study should be directed to either Dr. Whitney Whitaker (wkwhitaker@fhsu.edu) or the principal investigator, Jordan Sparrow (jasparrow@mail.fhsu.edu). If you have questions, concerns, or suggestions about human research at FHSU, you may call the Office of Scholarship and Sponsored Projects at FHSU (785) 628-4349 during normal business hours.

CONSENT
I have read the above information about this study. By continuing, I agree to participate in this study. I understand that I can change my mind and withdraw my consent at any time. By continuing, I understand that I am not giving up any legal rights and I am between the ages of 18 and 65.

Please click continue to advance to the survey.

Appendix C

<div align="center">

Demographic Questions

Stroop Task Link

https://www.psytoolkit.org/experiment-library/experiment_stroop.html

</div>

1. Age _____

2. Sex

    a. Male

    b. Female

    c. Other

3. Ethnicity

    a. Caucasian

    b. African American

    c. Asian/ Pacific Islander

    d. Hispanic

    e. Native American/ Alaskan Native

    f. Other

4. Occupation
    a. Law enforcement
    b. Education
    c. Health care
    d. Mental health care
    e. Marketing
    f. Business
    g. Retail
    h. Food
    i. Service worker

Appendix D
Acceptability of Racial Microaggressions Scale (Mekawi & Todd, 2018)

Instructions: Imagine that you are talking with a racially diverse group of peers about various topics, including race and ethnicity. Rate how ACCEPTABLE you think it would be for a White group member to say the following to a racial/ethnic minority group member:

1 = Totally Unacceptable

2 = Somewhat Unacceptable

3 = Unacceptable

4 = Acceptable

5 = Somewhat Acceptable

6 = Totally Acceptable

1. Lots of people worked their way out of poverty, why can't Blacks and Latino's do the same?
2. African Americans would get more jobs if they dressed more professionally.
3. If African Americans spoke less slang, they'd be more likely to get jobs.
4. There won't be racial progress until racial minorities stop relying on handouts from the government.
5. Black people should stop using slavery as an excuse for their problems.
6. Minorities are just too sensitive about racism.
7. Latinos receive lots of unearned benefits just for being minorities.
8. People from your racial group get hired easily because companies need to meet racial quotas.
9. If Latinos spoke more English, they'd be more likely to get jobs.
10. I don't see your race, I see you as a person.
11. I don't care if you're Black, Brown, Purple, Yellow, Green … I see all people as the same.
12. There is only one race, the human race.
13. People shouldn't see race anymore.
14. Even if we look different, we are basically all the same.
15. I don't notice race.

16. We are all the same.

17. People are just people, their race doesn't matter.

18. Everyone is treated the same by the legal system.

19. Everyone has the same chance to succeed regardless of their race.

20. Everyone gets a fair legal trial regardless of their race.

21. Everyone has access to the same resources such as schools and hospitals.

22. Race doesn't play a role in who gets pulled over by the police.

23. Race doesn't matter for who gets sent to prison.

24. Everyone has access to the same educational opportunities, regardless of race or ethnicity.

25. When people get shot by the police, it is more about what they were doing rather than their race.

26. Everyone in life goes through obstacles, regardless of their race.

27. Latinos are just so sexy.

28. Native Americans are so fierce.

29. I just love black women's butts.

30. Latino men are such passionate lovers.

31. You are so exotic.

32. You're so beautiful, you're like a geisha.

33. You're so beautiful, you look like Pocahontas.

34. Your skin color is so exotic.

Appendix E

White Privilege Attitudes Scale (Pinterits et al., 2009)

Please respond using the rating scale below:

1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Somewhat Disagree

3 = Disagree

4 = Agree

5 = Somewhat Agree

6 = Strongly Agree

1. I intend to work toward dismantling White privilege.
2. I want to begin the process of eliminating White privilege.
3. I take action to dismantle White privilege.
4. I have not done anything about White privilege.
5. I plan to work to change our unfair social structure that promotes White privilege.
6. I'm glad to explore my White privilege.
7. I accept responsibility to change White privilege.
8. I look forward to creating a more racially equitable society.
9. I take action against White privilege with people I know.
10. I am eager to find out about letting go of White privilege.
11. I don't care to explore how I supposedly have unearned benefits from being White.
12. I am curious about how to communicate effectively to break down White privilege.
13. I am anxious about stirring up bad feelings by exposing the advantages that Whites have.
14. I worry about what giving up White privilege means for me.
15. If I were to speak up against White privilege, I would fear losing my friends.
16. I am worried that taking action against White privilege will hurt my relationships with other Whites.
17. If I address White privilege, I might alienate my family.
18. I am anxious about the personal work I must do within myself to eliminate White privilege.
19. Everyone has equal opportunity, so this so-called White privilege is really White bashing.
20. White people have it easier than people of color.
21. Our social structure system promotes White privilege.
22. Plenty of people of color are more privileged than Whites.
23. I am ashamed that the system is stacked in my favor because I am White.
24. I am ashamed of my White privilege.
25. I am angry knowing I have White privilege.
26. I am angry knowing that I keep benefiting from White privilege.
27. White people should feel guilty about having White privilege.
28. I feel awful about White privilege.

Appendix F

Propensity to Make Attributions to Prejudice (Miller & Saucier, 2018)

Please respond using the rating scale below:

1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Mostly Disagree

3 = Somewhat Disagree

4 = Slightly Disagree

5 = Neither Agree or Disagree

6 = Slightly Agree

7 = Somewhat Agree

8 = Mostly Agree

9 = Strongly Agree

1. People discriminate against people who are not like them.
2. Racist behavior is more widespread than people think it is.
3. Other people treat minorities based on stereotypes.
4. You'll see lots of racism if you look for it.
5. Racial minorities are too worried about being discriminated against.
6. Racial minorities are too sensitive about stereotypes.
7. Minorities today are overly worried about being victims of racism.
8. People are overly concerned about racial issues.
9. I think about why racial minorities are treated stereotypically.
10. I think about whether people's actions are prejudiced or discriminatory manner.
11. I consider whether people's actions are prejudiced or discriminatory.
12. I am on the lookout for instances of prejudice or discrimination.
13. I am quick to recognize prejudice.
14. My friends think I'm good at spotting racism.
15. I find that prejudice and discrimination are pretty easy to spot.

Appendix G

Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale- Short Form C (Reynolds, 1982)

Please respond using the rating scale below:

1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Somewhat Disagree

3 = Disagree

4 = Agree

5 = Somewhat Agree

6 = Strongly Agree

1. It is sometimes hard for me to go on with my work if I am not encouraged.
2. I sometimes feel resentful when I don't get my way.
3. On a few occasions, I have given up doing something because I thought too little of my ability.
4. There have been times when I felt like rebelling against people in authority even though I knew they were right.
5. No matter who I'm talking to, I'm always a good listener.
6. There have been occasions that I took advantage of someone.
7. I'm always willing to admit it when I make a mistake.
8. I sometimes try to get even rather than forgive and forget.
9. I am always courteous, even to people who are disagreeable.
10. I have never been irked when people expressed ideas very different from my own.
11. There have been times when I was quite jealous of the good fortune of others.
12. I am sometimes irritated by people who ask favors of me.
13. I have never deliberately said something that hurt someone's feelings.

Appendix H

Debriefing Form

Thank you for participating in this study. We appreciate your time and honesty when answering the questions. The purpose of this study was to learn more about the attitudes and opinions of students in relation to the acceptability of **micro-aggressive behaviors** (defined as subtle, stunning, often automatic and non-verbal "put-downs" exchanged between two different groups). Specifically, researchers were interested in assessing whether or not an individual's awareness, remorse, willingness to confront, and the anticipated costs of addressing their **White privilege** (unearned advantages of being White in a racially stratified society) could influence how individuals view the acceptability of microaggressions. Furthermore, researchers were also interested in whether or not one's **propensity to make attributions to prejudice** will also influence the acceptability of racial microaggressions.

If you have any questions about this project or your rights as a participant in this project, please contact:

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Crisis Text Line
24/7 Crisis Support
Text CONNECT to 741741

Thank you again for your participation.

Appendix I

IRB Approval Letter

OFFICE OF SCHOLARSHIP AND SPONSORED PROJECTS

DATE:

TO: FROM:

STUDY TITLE:
IRB REFERENCE #: SUBMISSION TYPE:

ACTION: DECISION DATE:

REVIEW CATEGORY:

March 8, 2019

Jordan Sparrow
Fort Hays State University IRB

[1407046-1] Attitudes, Preferences, and Acceptability Study 19-104
New Project

DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS March 8, 2019

Exemption category # 2

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this research study. The departmental human subjects research committee and/or the Fort Hays State University IRB/IRB Administrator has determined that this project is EXEMPT FROM IRB REVIEW according to federal regulations.

Please note that any changes to this study may result in a change in exempt status. Any changes must be submitted to the IRB for review prior to implementation. In the event of a change, please follow the Instructions for Revisions at http://www.fhsu.edu/academic/gradschl/irb/.

The IRB administrator should be notified of adverse events or circumstances that meet the definition of unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects. See http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/policy/AdvEvntGuid.htm.

We will put a copy of this correspondence on file in our office. Exempt studies are not subject to continuing review.

If you have any questions, please contact Leslie Paige at lpaige@fhsu.edu or 785-628-4349. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.

- 1 -

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Thesis: This is America: Examining the Influence of White Privilege and the Propensity to Make Attributions to Prejudice on the Acceptability of Racial Microaggressions

Author: Jordan Sparrow-Antonio

Signature: *Jordan Sparrow-Antonio*

Date: 5/12/2020