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Exploring Whites' Recognition of Racial Microaggressions through an Existential Lens

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EXPLORING WHITES' RECOGNITION OF RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS
THROUGH AN EXISTENTIAL LENS

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Abstract

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

Keywords: microaggressions, worldview, terror management theory

Exploring Whites' Recognition of Racial Microaggressions through an Existential Lens

“Here’s the thing. When we talk about race relations in America or racial progress, it’s all nonsense. There are no race relations. White people were crazy. Now they’re not as crazy. To say that Black people have made progress would be to say they deserve what happened to them before. So, to say Obama is progress is saying that he’s the first Black person that is qualified to be President. That’s not Black progress. That’s White progress. There’s been Black people qualified to be president for hundreds of years... My kids are smart, educated, beautiful, polite children. There have been smart, educated, beautiful, polite Black children for hundreds of years. The advantage that my children have is that my children are encountering the nicest White people that America has ever produced. Let’s hope America keeps producing nicer White people.”

– Chris Rock

Interview with *New York Magazine*, November 30, 2014

Introduction

Whites' recognition of racial microaggressions - defined as the harmful, day-to-day slights in which they or others subtly subjugate, demean, or diminish racial minorities - is a critical step toward the dissolution of racism and race-based oppression in the United States (Pierce, Carew, Pierce-Gonzalez, & Willis, 1978; Sue et al., 2007; Wong, Derthick, David, Saw, & Okazaki, 2014). Successfully addressing a problem requires that people acknowledge a problem exists in the first place. Substantive evidence has amassed demonstrating that people of color are acutely aware of instances and circumstances in which racial prejudice is expressed or discrimination occurs (Sue, Lin, Torino, Capodilupo, & Rivera, 2009). Conversely, far less research has explored the interpretive experiences of perpetrators and bystanders of race-related prejudice and discrimination, individuals who are typically White. This missing link is critical, as it constitutes an important part of the national conversation about race relations and can

meaningfully inform attempts toward social justice. Given the widespread debate surrounding recent race-related events (e.g., the deaths of Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Tamir Rice, Sandra Bland, Philando Castile, Alton Sterling) and the increasingly divisive social and political atmosphere, the call for greater understanding of and insight into psychological processes underlying interracial interactions is exceedingly urgent. The current paper attempts to provide insight into Whites' interpretive experiences of covert racial discrimination (i.e., microaggressions) by utilizing an existential experimental framework (terror management theory). This research seeks to clarify the psychological constructs and situational elements at play in Whites' recognition of racial microaggressions such that future attempts toward the elimination of prejudice, racism, and discrimination in the United States may be better informed.

Racism and Racial Microaggressions

Racism is a pervasive social ideology that assigns differential value to human beings as a function of skin color or racial group membership in order to subordinate individuals deemed inferior to their superior counterparts (Helms, 2007; Jones, 1997). In American culture, racism emerges through racial discrimination, prejudice, and oppression at individual and institutional levels. In the past, overt racism was socially acceptable and was expressed in a variety of ways, including discriminatory laws barring racial minorities from fair and equitable access to housing and education, as well as the normative use of epithets, a practice that served to demean racial minorities. These overt expressions of racism, however, have become socially unacceptable as democratic ideals of equality have been publicly embraced. Consequently, racism is now commonly

expressed more covertly (Duckitt, 1992; Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986; Kunda, 1999). These covert expressions of racism are called *racial microaggressions*.

Racial microaggressions are “the brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative slights and insults” to the target person or group based on minority racial group membership (Pierce et al., 1978; Sue et al., 2007, p. 5). They take the form of subtle, aggressive words or actions that communicate demeaning messages, and in effect can “invalidate, negate, or diminish the psychological thoughts, feelings, and racial reality” of target groups (Sue, Capodilupo, & Holder, 2008, p. 329). Examples of microaggressions include subtle snubs, hidden insults, or name-calling. They may manifest as dismissive gestures or social exclusion. When a person of color is told, “You are a credit to your race,” the implication is that members of that non-dominant race are inferior to Whites. When a person of color is mistaken as a service worker, the underlying message is that racial minorities are servants to Whites (Sue et al., 2007). Notably, racial microaggressions are defined not by their intent but by their impact. That is, perpetrators of racial microaggressions need not intend to harm or diminish targets for a microaggression to occur. In fact, perpetrators of racial microaggressions are often unaware of the racially infused and aggressive nature of the words or actions that they communicate (Sue et al., 2007).

While microaggressions may, in isolation, be small (“micro”), the accumulated effect of these day-to-day slights and insults is significant and similar to that of more overt discrimination (Franklin, 2004). Targets of discrimination experience increased risk of significant adverse consequences, including depression, anxiety, anger, psychological

and physical stress, cardiovascular reactivity, hypertension, substance use, and numerous other physical and psychological problems (Neblett, Terzian & Harriott, 2010; Pascoe & Richman, 2009; Williams & Mohammed, 2009; Williams, Neighbors, & Jackson, 2008). In addition to the consequences discrimination has on individuals, discrimination leads to the systematic disempowerment of minorities within institutions of social services, education, and employment (Nadal, 2011; Sue et al., 2007). As a result of their marginalization by dominant American culture, racial minorities may experience feelings of invisibility and disempowerment (Sue et al., 2008). Whites' perceptions that race is unimportant, discrimination is not a problem, or microaggressions are innocuous can be highly invalidating to targets and may even perpetuate racial discrimination, which is associated with poorer mental and physical health outcomes for racial minorities (Pascoe & Richman, 2009). Microaggressions, no matter how apparently small or trivial to the casual observer, have tremendous physical and psychological effects on targets over time.

Undoubtedly, targets of racism bear the heaviest burdens of racism (Kivel, 1996). However, dominant, empowered group members - Whites, in this instance - are also harmed by racism. Costs of racism to Whites include fear of racial minorities; anxiety about confronting their own racial privilege and others' oppression; anger, sadness, or helplessness in response to a racist system; guilt and shame about the privilege they have by virtue of racism; and apathy, which may manifest as disinterest in issues related to race (Spanierman & Heppner, 2004). Additional costs of racism to Whites include social isolation from diverse others and distorted views of self and/or others. A common example of the latter is when Whites embrace and espouse a colorblind ideology and/or harbor racial stereotypes about out-group members (Spanierman & Heppner, 2004).

Several studies indicate that perpetrators of racial microaggressions (usually Whites) experience some distress following racial microaggressions¹ (Doucette, 2011; Henfield, 2011; Sue & Constantine, 2007; Sue et al., 2009; Sue, Rivera, Capodilupo, Lin, & Torino, 2010). Essentially, racism - including microaggressions - hurts everybody (Kivel, 1996; Tatum, 1992).

Given that microaggressions cause harm to both targets and perpetrators/bystanders, it is worthwhile to explore these interracial interactions in greater depth with the eventual goal of eliminating such encounters. In order to reduce or eliminate this problem, however, people need to recognize that a problem even exists. The recognition of racial microaggressions by racial minority group members is well documented (Sue et al., 2009). People of color (i.e. targets of racial microaggressions) tend to be acutely aware of some slight or insult when it occurs, likely due to their racial socialization, which includes explicit and specific messages about the prevalence of racial bias and how to cope (Brown & Krishnakumar, 2007; McHale et al., 2006). Although the study of microaggressions is in "relative infancy" (Wong et al., 2014, p. 181), a number of measures have emerged that study the target's experience of racial microaggressions, including the Racial Microaggressions Scale (RMAS; Torres-Harding, Andrade, & Romero Diaz, 2012); the Gendered Racial Microaggressions Scale for Black Women (Lewis & Neville, 2015); and the Racial and Ethnic Microaggressions Scale (REMS;

¹ This is particularly interesting given the aforementioned data, which suggests that Whites are generally unaware of instances in which they have committed racial microaggressions. Perhaps this constellation of data indicate that Whites' conscious and unconscious recognition of racism are separate and may conflict. Another related explanation is that Whites' may experience the distress related to microaggressions, but may not be able to process, understand, and contextualize those experiences within a framework of racism, injustice, and oppression.

Nadal, 2011). These scales represent a notable effort from the field of psychology toward research and assessment of the psychological impact of microaggressions on targets.

The recognition of racial microaggressions by Whites is a facet of social judgment that has not been as well researched. Anecdotal evidence from people of color indicates that within intergroup encounters, Whites do not appear to recognize and/or acknowledge microaggressions they observe or commit in social situations (Anah, 2015; Sue et al., 2009). Recent research suggests that Whites are significantly less likely to recognize racial microaggressions than are non-Whites (Gold & Taylor, 2013). In response to being told a microaggression has occurred, many Whites deny any harmful intent, contend that the person of color bringing the issue to light is “oversensitive” or “paranoid,” or suggest that the event in question is banal or unremarkable (Sue et al., 2009).

A number of general hypotheses exist for why Whites are less likely than people of color to recognize racial microaggressions that they perpetrate or observe. Most Whites may conceptualize themselves as “decent human beings” who would not and do not hold racist attitudes or behave in a discriminatory manner (Wong et al., 2014, p. 182). Additionally, Whites may be fearful of being labeled as racist if they acknowledge the relevance of race in a particular social interaction; it may be upsetting to confront their own biases; or they may downplay their race-related privilege because it may imply that they did not entirely earn their achievements (Sue et al., 2010; Sue & Constantine, 2007; Young, 2003).

The paucity of research regarding the recognition of racial microaggressions by Whites is problematic because Whites are likely to be perpetrators or bystanders of racial microaggressions. In addition to anecdotal evidence from people of color to that effect,

the formulation of studies examining racial microaggressions is highly informative in regard to Whites' roles. Wong et al. (2014) conducted a review of psychological research about racial microaggressions in which they summarized 73 peer-reviewed papers. Remarkably, among those 73 studies, "all of the studies for which race of offender was documented explored racial microaggressions perpetrated by Whites" (p. 194). While perpetrators of racial microaggressions are not limited to Whites, Whites' role as perpetrator is an important one to explore. As the dominant racial group in America, Whites are uniquely empowered to reduce the oppression of minorities. Whites' acknowledgment that commonplace, covert, race-related indignities are occurring is required to eliminate such harmful interactions. Ultimately, deeper understanding of Whites' perspectives is likely to provide increased opportunity to intervene.

Facets of Worldview Hypothesized to Impact Whites' Recognition of Racial Microaggressions

By virtue of humans' immersion in cultural contexts, all individuals develop and embrace a worldview. Worldview is a conceptual framework that both represents and yields an agreed upon and shared group construction of reality; it is composed of attitudes, values, beliefs, and opinions regarding the nature of the world that affects how individuals think, make decisions, behave, and define events (Ivey, Levy, & Simek-Downing, 1987; Koltko-Rivera, 2004). In human attempts to make sense of and understand a complex and, at times, chaotic world, the worldview mechanism brings order, consistency, and certainty, all of which provide psychological comfort (Geertz, 1973). Worldview is a broad construct that includes numerous psychological variables that may be relevant to Whites' recognition of racial microaggressions. The current study

seeks to explore three facets of worldview that are hypothesized to have a significant bearing on Whites' recognition of racial microaggressions: belief in a just world, social dominance orientation, and ethnocultural empathy.

Belief in a just world. Belief in a just world (BJW) theory posits that individuals are highly invested in defending the belief that the world is stable and logical (Lerner, 1980). In a just world, behaviors have knowable, reasonable, logical consequences. People get what they deserve (Furnham, 2003). This belief is generally adaptive because it suggests that life outcomes are largely within individuals' control. In this way, people are more inclined to commit to long-term goals and engage in socially appropriate behavior (Dalbert, 2001; Lerner, 1980; Lerner & Miller, 1978). After all, if behavior has little or no bearing on consequences, incentive to behave appropriately diminishes (Lerner & Simmons, 1966). High BJW has been shown to be associated with increased psychological well-being and life satisfaction (Lipkus, Dalbert, & Siegler, 1996; Schaafsma, 2013).

Lerner (1980) theorized that a threat to just world beliefs (i.e., injustice) lead to a highly uncomfortable psychological state, which causes people to engage in rational or "nonrational" strategies to manage the discomfort. Rational strategies may include working to reduce the observed injustice or seeking restitution when injustice cannot be undone. Nonrational strategies to resolve the tension between high BJW and injustice include denial and withdrawal (e.g., seeking confirmatory information and denying disconfirmatory evidence) and reinterpretation of the outcome, cause, or character of the victim such that the victim somehow deserves the unfortunate outcome that has befallen

him or her (i.e., victim-blaming; Lerner & Simmons, 1966; Reichle, Schneider, & Montada, 1998; Wilkins & Wenger, 2014).

Increased attributions of blame and derogation toward innocent victims is a well-documented social psychological effect of BJW. If one embraces the fundamental tenet that good things happen to good people and bad things to bad people, then it becomes difficult to reconcile how undeserved suffering or injustice can occur. For example, consider that at the group level, Blacks evidence highly disparate outcomes as compared to Whites in a variety of domains, including health (CDC Health Disparities and Inequalities Report, 2011; Mays, Cochran & Barnes, 2007; Orsi, Margellos-Anast, & Whitman, 2010; Walker, 2007), education (Hartney & Flavin, 2014; Matthews, 2014), housing (Desilva & Elmelech, 2012), criminal justice outcomes (Flexon, 2012; Helms & Costanza, 2010), political representation (Ruedin, 2013), and economic power (Crespo, 2011; Klarman, 2007). Many individuals with high BJW are likely to attribute these disparities *not* to situational factors such as present and past structural asymmetries, subjugation, and oppression, but rather to a fair, socially just process in which individuals' outcomes are direct results of their choices, abilities, and attitudes (Wilkins & Wenger, 2014). In essence, individuals with high BJW may deny injustice or undue suffering because acknowledging them would be in direct conflict with their just world beliefs, which provide a sense of safety and security from the capriciousness of the universe. In this way, BJW is a hierarchy-legitimizing ideology: It justifies the hierarchical positions of dominant and subordinate groups.

Prior research exploring BJW among members of various racial and ethnic groups demonstrates reliable differences in BJW among individuals with different racial and

ethnic backgrounds (Calhoun & Cann, 1994; Furnham, 1993; Furnham & Procter, 1989, Smith & Green, 1984). Whites endorse significantly higher just world beliefs than do Blacks (Hunt, 2000). These findings converge with other research that indicates Whites are more likely to believe that both systems and individuals are fair than are Blacks (Smith & Seltzer, 2000). Race has been named as the single most important factor shaping beliefs about justice and inequality in the United States (Hunt, 1996; Kluegel & Smith, 1986). Race-related differences in BJW may emerge because Whites seek to justify their position of power and privilege (Hunt, 2000). Whites' relatively higher BJW may also be related to their group-level experience of having harnessed near-exclusive, highly disproportionate legal and institutional power for the greater part (perhaps even the entirety) of American history. They have benefited from "fair" treatment that was once withheld from people of color, including the opportunity to buy and sell land, move freely throughout the country, and accumulate wealth (Chapman, 2010). Consequently, Whites' historical experience may underlie their group-level belief that the world is just. Additional research supports that racial minorities who experience day-to-day prejudice and discrimination have more difficulty embracing the belief that the world is just (Adoric & Kwartuc, 2007; Schaafsma, 2013). Again, their personal and historical experiences have likely informed the extent to which they expect fair outcomes.

Yet additional research suggests that BJW significantly affects how individuals respond to stressful events such as discrimination (Eliezer, Townsend, Sawyer, Major, & Mendes, 2011; Major, Kaiser, O'Brien, & McCoy, 2007; Schaafsma, 2013). BJW impacts not only how individuals interpret the events in their worlds, but also how they respond to and interact with others. Extending this line of research to the current question regarding

Whites' recognition of microaggressions, it is reasonable to hypothesize that high BJW will be associated with less recognition of microaggressions. Given that Whites evidence relatively high BJW (Calhoun & Cann, 1994; Hunt, 2000) they may be likely to ignore or rationalize an unjust social interaction, as acknowledging the injustice would pose a significant conflict with their core beliefs about the world (Parker & Taylor, 2017). In this way, Whites may enact a “nonrational” strategy in the face of evidence that may threaten their belief that the world is just.

Social dominance orientation. Social dominance orientation (SDO) is another hierarchy-legitimizing construct that is likely to impact Whites' recognition of microaggressions. SDO is a worldview that relates to the importance individuals place on status and power differentials. The construct of SDO is rooted in social dominance theory, which proposes that societies adopt hierarchical power structures in which access to resources is differentially allocated, thereby creating an unequal distribution among groups (Hodson, Rush, & Macinnis., 2010; Spanierman & Heppner, 2004). Members of the dominant group are vested in maintaining their dominant position and do so by endorsing power-enhancing ideologies (such as SDO) that justify their unequal power (Levin et al., 2012).

Individuals who endorse a strong SDO ardently affirm peoples' differential statuses in society as “fair and just” (Major et al., 2007, p. 1069). SDO is characterized by insensitivity to intergroup inequality and lack of concern about group power, dominance, superiority, and prestige. SDO has been shown to be negatively associated with empathy (Pratto et al., 1994). Power differences between groups are important, and high-SDO individuals denigrate low-status group members in order to maintain these

differences (Levin et al., 2012). Racism, classism, and sexism are passively tolerated and/or actively encouraged by individuals who are high-SDO (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). The social value orientation of individuals high in SDO is competitive: Their goal is to increase relative disparities among groups. Accomplishment comes not in maximizing absolute outcomes, but in establishing relative superiority over others. SDO, then, is a specific framework within which individuals view their world that explains why status differentials exist by affirming the dominance of the group in power and - implicitly or explicitly - the inferiority of non-dominant social groups.

Benefits to endorsement of SDO include confirmation that one's superior position is warranted and fair, thereby supporting intergroup dominance. Further, this hierarchy-legitimizing ideology provides people with an "explanation for reality" that helps individuals reduce uncertainty and anxiety, and therefore function more effectively (Major et al., 2007, p. 1069). In justifying and maintaining the superior position of the powerful in-group, this ideology necessarily derogates out-groups by attempting to keep them "in place" (Hodson et al., 2010, p. 661).

SDO is a critical construct in the discussion of racial discrimination because it links personal motives for self-empowerment with the simultaneous disempowerment or degradation of out-groups (Levin et al., 2012). Prior study of SDO is extensive and indicates a strong positive relationship between endorsement of SDO and negative evaluations of racial minorities (Duckitt, 2006; Oswald, 2005; Sibley & Duckitt, 2008; Sibley & Liu, 2010). Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, and Malle (1994) asserted that a critical tenet of SDO is its causal influence on prejudice expression. That is, SDO both precipitates and predicts prejudice expression of low-status out-groups. Members of any

racial or ethnic group may have a high SDO; however, the effects of SDO on prejudice expression are strongest for dominant group members against disadvantaged group members (Pratto, Sidanius, & Levin, 2006). In lab settings, high-SDO endorsers are more likely to defend a person who discriminates and less likely to protect a person who is discriminated against (Redford & Ratliff, 2016). Therefore, among Whites with high SDO, we would expect to find relatively strong prejudice endorsement and expression in response to minority groups.

Given the data on the relationship between SDO and prejudice expression, we predict that high SDO will be associated with less recognition of microaggressions. Ultimately, the motive behind social dominance is the derogation of out-groups, and microaggressions fulfill those motives (Gold & Taylor, 2013). People have great interest in affirmation of their status-legitimizing ideologies (Major et al., 2007). Therefore, Whites high in SDO, who by definition endorse power differentials and the derogation of low-status groups, will not find actions that confirm their beliefs out of place. Given this congruity of motive and action, it is unlikely that people high in SDO will recognize or acknowledge that a slight against an out-group member has occurred.

Ethnocultural empathy. Basic empathy is conceptualized as insight into, understanding of, and concern for others' thoughts and feelings (Eklund, 2011; Kohut, 1984; Rasoal, Eklund, & Hansen, 2011; Rogers, 1975). Empathy has affective and cognitive components and has been named as a critical building block for developing and maintaining healthy interpersonal relationships (Davis, 1983; Omdahl, 1995). It has been strongly associated with prosocial behavior, tolerance of diverse others, and reductions in intergroup conflict, prejudice, and discrimination (Albiero & Matricardi, 2014;

Backstrom & Bjorklund, 2007; Batson et al., 2007; Davis, 1983; McFarland, 2010; Levin et al., 2016; Rasoal, Jungert, Hau, & Andersson, 2011). The relationship between empathy and prejudice expression is bidirectional: Increased empathy leads to reductions in prejudice while increasing prejudice (through the activation of stereotypes, for example) leads to reductions in empathy. In one study, following primes of the “Black criminal” stereotype or the “promiscuous Black female” stereotype, White participants were less likely to support helpful treatment toward Black people as compared to a control condition in which stereotyped depictions were not presented (Johnson, Bushman, & Dovidio, 2008).

Ethnocultural empathy is a relatively new psychological construct that draws from similar pre-established constructs including cultural empathy (Ivey, Levy, & Simek-Downing, 1987; Ridley & Lingle, 1996), empathetic multicultural awareness (Junn, Morton, & Yee, 1995), cultural role taking (Scott & Borodovsky, 1990), ethnic perspective-taking (Quintana, Ybarra, Gonzalez-Doupe, & Baessa, 2000), and ethnotherapeutic empathy (Parson, 1993; Wang et al., 2003). Ethnocultural empathy is defined as empathy directed toward racial and ethnic groups that differ from one's own (Wang et al., 2003). The construct has also been described as "feeling, understanding, and caring about what someone from another culture feels, understands, and cares about" and is understood to be a dynamic trait that can be developed over time (Rasoal et al., 2011a, p. 8; Wang et al., 2003). Ethnocultural empathy directly works against ethnocentrism and racism, and has the potential to change attitudes toward diversity (Parson, 1993). Research suggests that there are racial differences in ethnocultural empathy: Non-White participants report significantly more ethnocultural empathy than

do Whites (Wang et al., 2003). Ethnocultural empathy "goes beyond" general empathy to include understand and acceptance of others' cultural context (Rasoal et al., 2011a, p. 6; Ridley & Lingle, 1996). As might be expected, a positive, moderate association has been found between general empathy and ethnocultural empathy (Albiero & Matricardi, 2014).

Ethnocultural empathy is a multidimensional concept based on core components of basic empathy (Rasoal et al., 2011b; Wang et al., 2003). Ridley and Lingle (1996) discussed three dimensions of empathy: intellectual, emotional, and communicative. Intellectual empathy is the ability to understand the thinking and feelings of a racially different person, and includes perspective-taking. Emotional empathy involves feeling the affective experience of a member of a different racial or ethnic group. Communicative empathy is the behavioral expression of intellectual and emotional empathy through words or actions (Wang et al., 2003, p. 222). Recent research in this area suggests that in addition to intellectual, emotional, and communicative empathy, another important component of ethnocultural empathy is awareness and/or acknowledgment of bias based on race or ethnic group membership (Mallinckrodt et al., 2014).

Given what research has suggested about empathy in general and ethnocultural empathy more specifically, it is likely that high ethnocultural empathy will be associated with increased recognition of microaggressions because individuals high in empathy (a) are aware of racism ("Awareness"), (b) can take the cognitive perspective of a racially different person ("Perspective-Taking"), and/or (c) are affectively impacted by racism and are motivated to act in supportive, empathic ways ("Empathic Action"). Individuals

with attunement to and concern for the cultural experiences of others are likely to be better equipped to recognize subtle acts of aggression that are racially motivated.

Utilizing an Existential Methodology

Terror management theory (TMT) is based on the work of cultural anthropologist Ernest Becker (1962, 1973, 1975), who synthesized information from a variety of social scientific fields into a unitary conceptualization of human cognition, motivation, and behavior (Solomon, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski, 1991). Becker emphasized that humans, by virtue of sophisticated intellectual abilities including self-consciousness, abstract thought, and symbolic identity, are aware of their own inevitable, impending, and unpredictable deaths (Becker, 1962; Pyszczynski, Greenberg, & Solomon, 1997). This recognition can be terrifying, particularly when considering the strong and omnipresent biological drive toward self-preservation (Becker, 1973; Darwin, 1859; Jonas et al., 2008). According to existential psychology, the fundamental human conflict is this juxtaposition of humans' innate biological drive for life with the psychological awareness that they will certainly die (Solomon, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski, 2004).

The terror that accompanies recognition of mortality and the often unpredictable, uncontrollable nature of death is tremendous. If unmanaged, these feelings of vulnerability and helplessness in the face of ultimate annihilation would be overwhelming and debilitating (Bakan, 1971; Pollack, 1979; Solomon et al., 1991). Consequently, humans are motivated to keep these terrifying death-related thoughts out of consciousness to enable functioning. Terror management theorists state that humans do so through the creation and maintenance of culture. Culture insulates individuals from the anxiety and terror that recognition of death elicits by creating a symbolic conception of

the universe that elevates humans above plant and animal life (Becker, 1975; Solomon et al., 1991). Specific culture-bound constructs that buffer against existential anxiety are worldview and self-esteem (Solomon et al., 1991).

In TMT, worldview is a conception of reality that "provide[s] the universe with order, meaning, [and] value" (Greenberg et al., 1990, p. 308; Pyszczynski, Greenberg, & Koole, 2004). Cultural worldviews provide "a meaningful explanation of life and [humanity's] place in the cosmos" (Pyszczynski, 2004, p. 830). They outline what constitutes a "good" and "valuable" life, and emphasize the importance of adhering to these prescriptions (Becker, 1962; Solomon et al., 1991). Notably, all the aforementioned psychological variables (BJW, SDO, and EE) constitute facets of worldview.

An unfortunate characteristic of worldview is its need for continual reinforcement (Greenberg et al., 1990). It is extremely sensitive to threat, which comes in two primary forms: death awareness and alternate worldviews. The first, death awareness, is called mortality salience (MS) among TMT researchers. MS describes the extent to which death-related thoughts are made accessible and can vary in intensity. On the low end, MS may be elicited by contemplating the physical experience of dying and reflecting on the emotions that accompany that deliberation (Arndt, Cook & Routledge, 2004; Burke et al., 2010). Extreme forms of MS take the form of trauma, and have the effect of destroying the illusion of safety, security, and control that the anxiety buffer usually protects (Janoff-Bulman, 1992; Salzman, 2001). MS can be elicited vicariously (e.g., hearing a news report about a murder) or personally (e.g., being in a serious car accident), consciously (e.g., writing about how one imagines his/her funeral) or unconsciously (e.g., subliminal priming of death). Typically, the processes that accompany MS occur outside conscious

awareness, and therefore may not be entirely apparent to individuals when they are experienced (Solomon et al., 1991). MS threatens worldview because it challenges the legitimacy of individuals' attempts to ascribe and attain meaning within cultural value systems. Death, after all, supersedes individuals' attempts for control.

The presence of alternate worldviews also poses a threat to one's worldview. The mere existence of differing perspectives illuminates that a worldview may not be absolutely correct, which threatens a person's confidence in his/her own conceptualization of the world (Greenberg et al., 1990). TMT suggests that individuals have positive reactions to similar others and negative reactions to dissimilar others because each person has an existential need to have one's own worldview affirmed. In sum, MS and alternate worldviews erode the effectiveness of worldview by reminding individuals about their impending deaths and the tenuousness of their belief systems, which leads to an aversive state. Individuals are highly motivated to minimize this existential discomfort, typically by distancing themselves from and/or invalidating the legitimacy of others' worldviews.

Individuals distance themselves from the existential terror others' worldviews may elicit by becoming more ardently defensive and protective of their own worldviews. This hypothesis - the *mortality salience hypothesis* - states that "to the extent that meaning and personal value serve to avert mortality concerns, then heightening the salience of mortality should intensify reliance on and defense of psychological structures that sustain a sense that one is a significant being in a meaningful world" (Landau, Greenberg, Solomon, Pyszczynski, & Martens, 2006, p. 880). Thus, individuals cling more desperately to their worldviews in the face of existential challenge. A consequence

of the mortality salience hypothesis is *worldview defense*, in which people tend to favor those who support or affirm their worldview and exhibit hostility toward those who threaten it (Greenberg, Pyszczynski, & Solomon, 1997; Pyszczynski, Greenberg, & Solomon, 1999). A great deal of TMT research focuses on how MS impacts reactions to people or ideas that strengthen or threaten one's worldview.

TMT Research, MS, and Whites' Recognition of Microaggressions

Recognition of racial microaggressions is a process involving members of at least two racial groups in which some social judgment of the intergroup interaction occurs. Although existing TMT research has yet to delve into Whites' recognition of racial microaggressions specifically, there are prior studies about intergroup relations (Greenberg et al., 1990) and social judgments (Rosenblatt et al., 1989) more generally. Exploration of these findings may provide some valuable information about how MS is likely to affect Whites' recognition of racial microaggressions.

In regard to studies about intergroup relationships, a strong finding within the TMT literature is that when mortality is made salient, individuals demonstrate in-group favoritism and out-group derogation (Bassett & Connelly, 2011; Cohen, Jussim, Harber, & Bhasin, 2009; Florian & Mikulincer, 1997; Greenberg et al., 1990; Greenberg, Schimel, Martens, & Solomon, 2001; Greenberg et al., 1997; Harmon-Jones, Greenberg, Solomon, & Simon, 1996; Niesta, Fritsche, & Jonas, 2008; Rosenblatt et al., 1989). The in-group is associated with one's own cultural worldviews, so protection and elevation of the in-group is critical in buffering against death anxiety. MS has also been shown to be associated with increased stereotypic thinking about out-group members (Castano, 2004; Schimel et al., 1999). TMT theorists reason that these results emerge because out-group

members who conform to stereotypes confirm an individual's worldview; non-conforming out-group members challenge their worldview. Thus, in the presence of death reminders, individuals are more likely to stereotype culturally dissimilar others than when MS is not present in order to affirm their own worldview.

Individuals may also defend their worldviews by altering their social perceptions or judgments of others' actions (Rosenblatt et al., 1989). One study suggested that when under the MS condition, onlookers became more tolerant of hate crimes when victims were members of groups that threatened their worldview compared to conditions in which victims were not worldview-threatening (Lieberman, Arndt, Personius, & Cook, 2001). In another study, MS was associated with increased attribution of blame toward innocent victims (Hirschberger, 2006). According to TMT, observing others who are victims of heinous crimes or grievous accidents elicits MS by highlighting one's own fundamental inability to attain safety, security, and control. In order to reconcile the extreme discomfort that this idea elicits with an existential need to feel invulnerable, individuals are compelled to believe that the victim has somehow contributed to his or her own negative outcome (Landau et al., 2004). These results strongly support that social judgments are influenced by death threat, a finding that converges with other TMT research (Florian & Mikulincer, 1997; Florian, Mikulincer, & Hirschberger, 2001; Rosenblatt et al., 1989).

In summary, MS has significant ramifications for the ways in which individuals judge social, race-related stimuli such that they are more likely to blame, penalize, and distance themselves from worldview-threatening (i.e., out-group) others. These prior findings within the research domains of intergroup relations and social judgment inform

the hypothesized relationship between MS and microaggression recognition.

Conceptualizing belief in a just world, social dominance orientation, and ethnocultural empathy as facets of worldview, the mortality salience hypothesis would predict that the presence of MS will increase adherence to these respective variables insofar as they are central components of worldview (Parker & Taylor, 2015). TMT is likely to provide increased insight into these functions of these variables and how recognition of microaggressions is affected by death awareness.

The Present Study

The current study explored the relationships between psychological variables (belief in a just world, social dominance orientation, and ethnocultural empathy) and Whites' recognition of racial microaggressions. Three separate facets of ethnocultural empathy were explored: Awareness, Perspective-Taking, and Empathic Action. Further, the study examined the impact of a situational variable – an existentially threatening prime – on Whites' recognition of racial microaggressions. Specifically, hypotheses are as follows:

1. Participants in the MS condition will recognize racial microaggressions significantly less than will participants in the control condition.
2. (a) Higher endorsement of BJW will be associated with less microaggression recognition.

(b) MS will change the relationship between BJW and microaggression recognition such that the MS condition will be associated with less recognition.
3. (a) Higher endorsement of SDO will be associated with less microaggression recognition.

- (b) MS will change the relationship between SDO and microaggression recognition such that the MS condition will be associated with less recognition.
4. (a) Higher endorsement of Awareness of contemporary racism and privilege ("Awareness") will be associated with more microaggression recognition.
- (b) MS will change the relationship between Awareness and microaggression recognition such that the MS condition will be associated with less recognition.
5. (a) Higher endorsement of Empathic perspective-taking ("Perspective-Taking") will be associated with more microaggression recognition.
- (b) MS will change the relationship between Perspective-Taking and microaggression recognition such that the MS condition will be associated with less recognition.
6. (a) Higher endorsement of Empathic feeling and acting as an ally ("Empathic Action") will be associated with more microaggression recognition.
- (b) MS will change the relationship between Empathic Action and microaggression recognition such that the MS condition will be associated with less recognition.

Method

Participants. Participants were adults aged 18 and older who self-identified racially as exclusively Caucasian/White and who live in the United States. Amazon Mechanical Turk was the source of participant recruitment. Individuals who completed all measures associated with the study were compensated with \$1.00 for their time and effort. Note that the invitation to participate was extended and compensation was provided to all willing, adult participations regardless of racial and/or ethnic

identification. However, only data submitted from self-identified White/Caucasian individuals were included in and analyzed for this study. Participants and potential participants were not informed that only White/Caucasian participants' data would be utilized for the current study.

A total of 476 individuals completed the online study, 223 of which self-identified as exclusively White/Caucasian. Thirteen respondents were removed from the dataset because they did not pass the manipulation check (i.e., the content of their written answer to the mortality salience or non-mortality salience prime was not appropriate or relevant). Therefore, the final study sample consisted of 210 self-identified, exclusively Caucasian individuals who live in the United States. One-hundred-and-five participants were randomized into the experimental (MS) condition and 105 were randomized into the control (non-MS) condition.

The average age of the sample was 38.48 years ($SD = 12.746$). Participants were majority female (60.0%). The majority of the sample had obtained at least some college experience (54.8%). Demographic data for these 210 participants are presented in Table 1.

Procedure. Participants were asked to read an informed consent statement and to indicate whether they agreed to participate before initiating study measures. Consenting participants were then directed to an online survey, which was confidential and took approximately 15 minutes to complete. All participants completed the General Belief in a Just World Scale (GB-JWS; Appendix A), the Social Dominance Orientation Scale (SDOS; Appendix B), and the Everyday Multicultural Competencies/Revised Scale of Ethnocultural Empathy (EMC/RSEE; Appendix C). The GB-JWS, SDOS, and

EMC/RSEE scales were presented in a randomized order for each participant so as to minimize order effects. After completion of these measures, the mortality salience manipulation or control manipulation was presented (Appendix D). Condition was randomly assigned such that approximately half of participants were presented with the mortality salience (MS) condition while the other half received the control condition (no death salience). All participants then completed the same filler tasks: The Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS; Appendix E) and a reading of the excerpt "The Growing Stone" (Appendix E). Finally, all participants read and rated several vignettes, some of which included racial microaggressions and some of which did not (Appendix F). After all measures were completed, participants completed a series of demographic questions (Appendix G), then were granted compensation.

Measures. *General Belief in a Just World Scale (GB-JWS)*. The GB-JWS (Dalbert, 2000) includes six items ($\alpha = 0.90$) that inquire about the extent to which an individual believes the world is fair or just (Reich & Wang, 2015). Example items include, "I think basically the world is a just place," and "I believe that, by and large, people get what they deserve." Items are rated on a six-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 6 = strongly agree). Item endorsements are summed. Higher summed scores reflect greater endorsements of belief in a just world. See Appendix A.

***Social Dominance Orientation Scale (SDOS)*.** The SDOS (Pratto et al., 1994) includes 16 items ($\alpha = 0.90$) that assess the extent to which participants prefer hierarchy and dominance in social systems. Participants rated their agreement or disagreement with the statements on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). Sample SDOS items include, "Some groups of people are simply inferior to other

groups,” “It’s OK if some groups have more of a chance in life than others,” and “It’s probably a good thing that certain groups are at the top and other groups are at the bottom.” Half of the items were reverse-scored to control for acquiescence. Some of these items include, “Group equality should be our ideal,” “We would have fewer problems if we treated people more equally,” and “No group should dominate in society.” Higher summed scores indicate stronger social dominance orientations (SDO). See Appendix B.

Everyday Multicultural Competencies/Revised Scale of Ethnocultural Empathy (EMC/RSEE). The EMC/RSEE (Mallinckrodt et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2003) is a 48-item measure of empathy for others whose racial/ethnic background differs from one's own. It has six scales. The current study utilized three scales from the EMC/RSEE: Awareness of Contemporary Racism and Privilege (“Awareness,” 8 items; $\alpha = 0.79$; e.g., “The U.S. has a long way to go before everyone is truly treated equally”), Empathic Perspective-Taking (“Perspective-Taking,” 5 items; $\alpha = 0.69$; e.g., “It is easy for me to understand what it would feel like to be a person of another racial or ethnic background other than my own”), and Empathic Feeling and Acting as an Ally (“Empathic Action,” 8 items; $\alpha = 0.81$; e.g., “I get disturbed when other people experience misfortunes due to their racial or ethnic background”). Participants rated their agreement or disagreement with the statements on a six-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 6 = strongly agree). After reverse-coding specified items, a mean score for each of the scales was computed. Higher mean scores for all scales assessed represent greater ethnocultural empathy in cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains. See Appendix C.

Mortality salience prime or control condition. The mortality salience manipulation consisted of two open-ended prompts: (1) "Please briefly describe the emotions that the thought of your own death arouses in you," and (2) "Jot down, as specifically as you can, what you think will happen to you as you physically die and once you are physically dead." The control condition included two parallel prompts related not to death, but instead to watching television: (1) "Please briefly describe the emotions that the thought of watching television arouses in you," and (2) "Jot down, as specifically as you can, what you think will happen to you as you watch TV and once you are physically watching it." The manipulation and control conditions are identical to those commonly used in terror management research (Greenberg et al., 1990; Greenberg, Pyszczynski, Solomon, Simon, & Breus, 1994; Greenberg, Porteus, Simon, Pyszczynski, & Solomon, 1995; Heine, Harihara, & Niiya, 2002; McGregor et al., 1998; Rosenblatt et al., 1989). Responses to these questions were evaluated as a manipulation check (i.e., to ensure that content was relevant to the prompt) but was not content analyzed. See Appendix D.

Filler measures. Terror management theory methodology requires that mortality salience be out of conscious awareness in order for effects to be observed (Arndt, Greenberg, & Cook, 2002; Pyszczynski et al., 1999). Filler measures are utilized following the mortality salience or control primes to reduce the extent to which these primes are held in conscious awareness. A meta-analysis of TMT research indicates that mortality salience effects are most prominent when two or three filler measures are administered as compared to only one (Burke et al., 2010). Therefore, the current experiment utilized two measures that are commonly used in TMT research as fillers:

The Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) and the brief excerpt entitled “The Growing Stone” taken from *Exile and the Kingdom* (Camus, 1957).

Positive and Negative Affect Schedule. Positive and negative affect was measured using the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS). The PANAS consists of two 10-item subscales designed to measure positive (e.g., “interested,” “inspired,” and “proud”) and negative (“scared,” “upset,” and “irritable”) affective states (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). The scale is designed to be temporally flexible. Researchers have used a variety of time instructions, asking participants to rate how much they feel each emotion listed “right now,” “during the past week/month/year,” or “generally, on average.” For the current study, the prompt specified that participants rate how much they feel each emotion at the present moment. Participants rated each item on a five-point Likert scale ranging from “very slightly or not at all” to “extremely.” The PANAS demonstrates good internal consistency reliability ($\alpha = 0.81$ for positive affect and $\alpha = .88$ for negative affect; Watson et al, 1988) and its two-factor structure and criterion validity have been supported in a number of studies (e.g., Crawford & Henry, 2004; Molloy, Pallant, & Kantas, 2001). Endorsements on this scale were not included in statistical analyses, as the sole purpose of administration was as a distraction from the mortality salience and control primes.

The Growing Stone. “The Growing Stone” is a short excerpt written by Camus (1957) that has been used as a distracter task in number of TMT studies to remove thoughts of death from focal attention (e.g., Greenberg et al., 1994). This short passage is three paragraphs long. After reading the passage, participants are asked, “How do you feel about the overall description qualities of the story?” and are prompted to indicate

their response on a 9-point Likert scale (1 = not at all descriptive, 9 = very descriptive). They are also asked to indicate whether they believe the author of the passage is male or female. The original excerpt was modified slightly for the purposes of this study. In the original excerpt, the chauffeur's face is described as "black." Given the race-related content explored in this study and the apparent irrelevance of the "black" descriptor to the overall meaning of the vignette, the word "black" was removed. See Appendix E.

Recognition of Microaggressions. Participants read six short vignettes: four contained racial microaggressions, and two did not (see Appendix F). After reading each vignette, participants rated their perceptions of the social encounters on five six-point Likert scales: (1) not offensive – offensive, (2) comfortable – uncomfortable, (3) friendly – mean-spirited, (4) socially appropriate – socially inappropriate, and (5) not racially motivated – racially motivated. The rating on the fifth scale (not racially motivated - racially motivated) was used to assess whether the participant recognized the vignette as depicting a microaggression. The ratings of racial motivation for all four microaggressive vignettes were integrated into a single recognition score using principal components analysis. Higher values of the microaggression recognition variable suggest more recognition of racial microaggressions. See Appendix F.

Demographic Questionnaire. Participants completed a demographic questionnaire, which collected relevant personal information such as age, race and ethnicity, gender, and years of education. Participants were also asked about their income and socioeconomic status. Income is an objective indicator of quality of life while socioeconomic status is a separate construct that constitutes a subjective indicator of quality of life. See Appendix G.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

All data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 23. A priori power analyses for the proposed analyses (medium effect size, power = .80, $\alpha = .05$) indicated a total sample size of 128, yielding a minimum of 64 participants for each of the two conditions (Cohen, 1992; Faul, Erdfelder, Lang & Buchner, 2007). The main analysis included 210 participants (105 individuals in each of the two conditions), adequately meeting this requirement.

Manipulation Check

In order to determine whether microaggressive vignettes were perceived as substantively more microaggressive than the non-microaggressive vignettes, a paired sample t-test was used. The ratings of racial motivation for microaggressive and non-microaggressive vignettes were compared. Separate means were derived from the racial motivation ratings for the four microaggressive vignettes and the two non-microaggressive vignettes. Other ratings participants provided regarding the vignette (e.g., level of offensiveness, friendliness, social appropriateness, etc.) were not utilized in computing the recognition of microaggression variable. With a possible range of one to five, the groups significantly differed ($p < .001$, $t = 19.104$) such that the overall mean rating of racial motivation of microaggressive vignettes ($M = 3.988$) was significantly higher than the overall mean rating of racial motivation of non-microaggressive vignettes ($M = 2.198$). These findings support that the microaggressive vignettes were recognized by participants as more racially motivated than were the non-microaggressive vignettes.

Additionally, a review of participants' written responses to the mortality salience (experimental) and non-mortality salience (control) questionnaires revealed that each

participant answered their respective question and that their responses were relevant. No participants in the control condition wrote about death-related themes in their discussion of television. Consequently, it is reasonable to conclude that while participants in the control group were not exposed to or primed with death-related thoughts, all experimental participants were exposed to or primed with death-related thoughts.

Examining Potential Confounds

Gender. Three participants ($N = 3$) were excluded from gender analyses due to insufficient sample size: one participant had endorsed “other” and two participants did not indicate a gender. Normality of data was tested using the Shapiro-Wilk test (Shapiro & Wilk, 1965). Results suggest microaggression recognition data by gender are not distributed normally ($W = 0.933, p < .001$). Thus, a nonparametric test was indicated. Data analysis utilizing the Mann-Whitney test indicate that the distributions for the females and males are statistically significantly different ($U = 3937.500, M_{\text{female}} = 0.141, M_{\text{male}} = -0.253, p = .006$) such that females were more likely to recognize microaggressions than were males. The Mann-Whitney test was also utilized to explore gender differences with regard to belief in a just world (BJW), social dominance orientation (SDO), awareness of contemporary racism and privilege (Awareness), empathic perspective-taking (Perspective-Taking), and empathic feeling and acting as an ally (Empathic Action). Results suggest that significant gender differences emerge in SDO ($U = 3889.500, M_{\text{female}} = 35.37, M_{\text{male}} = 42.88, p = .004$) and Empathic Action ($U = 3140.500, M_{\text{female}} = 4.490, M_{\text{male}} = 3.801, p < .001$). Nonsignificant differences emerged between males and females in BJW ($U = 5031.500, M_{\text{female}} = 22.198, M_{\text{male}} = 22.395, p =$

.865), Awareness ($U = 4325.500$, $M_{\text{female}} = 4.151$, $M_{\text{male}} = 3.846$, $p = .064$), and Perspective-Taking ($U = 4567.000$, $M_{\text{female}} = 3.790$, $M_{\text{male}} = 3.630$, $p = .201$).

Age. Analyses were conducted to explore the potential confounding effect of age on microaggression recognition. No individuals were excluded from analyses. A linear regression indicated that age was significantly predictive of microaggression recognition among study participants ($\beta = -.016$, $t(208) = -3.015$, $p = .003$) such that younger people were more likely than older people to identify the racial motivation in microaggressive vignettes. Age also explained a significant proportion of variance in microaggression recognition ($R^2 = .042$, $F(1,208) = 9.091$, $p = .003$). Similar analyses exploring the potential predictive value of age with other study variables yielded nonsignificant findings. Age was not significantly associated with BJW ($\beta = -.012$, $t(208) = -.354$, $p = .724$), SDO ($\beta = -.125$, $t(208) = -1.192$, $p = .234$), Awareness ($\beta = -.008$, $t(208) = -1.053$, $p = .294$), Perspective-Taking ($\beta = -.001$, $t(208) = -.165$, $p = .869$), or Empathic Feeling ($\beta = .003$, $t(208) = .511$, $p = .610$).

Other Demographic Variables. In order to determine which – if any – demographic variables may need to be controlled for in stepwise multiple regression analyses, demographic variables including age, gender, education, socioeconomic status, and income were entered into a linear regression. It was found that educational attainment, socioeconomic status, and income were not significantly contributing to the recognition of microaggressions while gender and age demonstrated significant contributions. As such, educational attainment, socioeconomic status, and income were removed from analyses while age and gender remained in Step 1 in the multiple regression analyses.

Randomization Check

Multiple analyses were performed in order to determine whether the experimental (MS) and control (non-MS) groups differed significantly with respect to important demographic variables, including age, gender, education, income, and socioeconomic status. An independent samples t-test showed that the mean age of the two groups did not differ significantly ($t(208) = -.416, p = .678$), as expected. The distribution of males and females across the two conditions was also approximately even (Pearson's $\chi^2 = 1.798, df = 2, p = .407$). Additional Chi Square analyses showed that participants in the experimental and control groups did not differ significantly with regard to educational attainment (Pearson's $\chi^2 = 5.006, df = 6, p = .543$), income (Pearson's $\chi^2 = 7.308, df = 5, p = .199$), or socioeconomic status (Pearson's $\chi^2 = 4.307, df = 9, p = .890$). In summary, the experimental and control groups were adequately randomized and do not differ when considering a number of important demographic variables. Table 2 shows demographic variables by condition.

Development of the Microaggression Recognition Variable

The four microaggressive vignettes designed to elicit nominal levels of racial motivation (i.e., racial microaggressions) were not equally influential in quantifying the magnitude of an individual's recognition score. Therefore, accounting for the component weights of the various ratings of racial motivation for each microaggressive vignette was indicated. As such, one composite recognition variable was computed using principal components analysis (PCA). PCA allows for a composite score to be calculated by weighting multiple responses together, where the weights are dependent on the covariance between individuals' responses. Responses between different pairs of

vignettes were found to have various levels of correlation (chi-square = 182.036, $df = 6$, $p < .001$), indicating a principal component methodology would be helpful to quantify individuals' overall scores. Extracted communalities for the four ratings of racial motivation in the microaggressive vignettes are as follows: .523, .636, .524, and .566. Analyses indicated that a single extracted factor sufficiently included and integrated the factor loadings of the component factors in analyses. See Table 3 for data associated with PCA.

Testing Normality of Primary Variables of Study

An examination of the skewness and kurtosis for all independent variables (BJW, SDO, Awareness, Perspective-Taking, Empathic Action) indicate that all variables are within the acceptable range of normality (Trochim & Donnelly, 2006; Field, 2000; Field, 2009; Gravetter & Wallnau, 2014). See Table 4.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 5 presents the ranges, means, standard deviations, and Cronbach's α for all measures utilized in these analyses. Generally, measures demonstrated excellent-to-good reliability. Notably, however, the Cronbach's α for the Perspective-Taking subscale of the EMC/RSEE was relatively low (.679).

Examining Multicollinearity

Many of the independent variables significantly correlated with one another (see Table 6). As such, an investigation of multicollinearity was warranted. According to examination of the tolerance and variance inflation factor for each variable in the multiple regression, multicollinearity was not indicated. See Table 7.

Main Analyses

Hypothesis 1. It was hypothesized that participants in the MS condition would recognize racial microaggressions significantly less than would participants in the control condition. According to the Shapiro-Wilk test, the microaggression recognition data are not distributed normally ($W = 0.966, p < .001$), so a nonparametric test, the Mann-Whitney test, was utilized. Data analysis utilizing the Mann-Whitney test indicate that the distributions for the mortality salience (experimental) condition and non-mortality salience (control) condition are not statistically significantly different ($U = 5118.000, p = .370$). Therefore, Hypothesis 1 is not supported: Participants in the MS condition did not recognize racial microaggressions significantly less (or more) than did participants in the control condition.

Hypotheses 2a and 2b. It was hypothesized that higher endorsement of BJW would be associated with less microaggression recognition (2a). To examine the unique contribution of BJW on microaggression recognition after accounting for the impact of age and gender, a hierarchical multiple regression analysis was performed. Age and gender were entered in Step 1²; BJW was entered in Step 2. The results of Step 1 indicated that age and gender accounted for a significant amount of variance in microaggression recognition ($R^2 = .078, F(2,205) = 8.613, p < .001$). Both age ($\beta = -.015, p < .05$) and gender ($\beta = .372, p < .05$) were statistically significant contributors to the prediction. In Step 2, BJW ($\beta = -.038, p < .001$) was found to explain a significant

² Note that Step 1 was the same for each of the following Hypotheses: 2a, 3a, 4a, 5a, and 6a. For brevity, the statistical results associated with Step 1 will only be reported in this text for 2a, although it applies to all the aforementioned hypotheses.

proportion of variance in microaggression recognition ($R^2 = .136$, $F(3,204) = 10.678$, $p < .001$) above and beyond that explained by age and gender. These results suggest that, as predicted, there is a significantly negative relationship between BJW and microaggression recognition.

It was also hypothesized that MS would change the relationship between BJW and microaggression recognition such that the MS condition would be associated with less recognition. At the bivariate level, MS was not associated with microaggression recognition (see Hypothesis 1). Therefore, analyses exploring moderation were not warranted, and Hypothesis 2b was not supported.

Hypotheses 3a and 3b. It was hypothesized that higher endorsement of SDO would be associated with less microaggression recognition (3a). To examine the unique contribution of SDO on microaggression recognition after accounting for the impact of age and gender, a hierarchical multiple regression analysis was performed. Age and gender were entered in Step 1; SDO was entered in Step 2. In Step 2, SDO ($\beta = -.020$, $p < .001$) was found to explain a significant proportion of variance in microaggression recognition ($R^2 = .221$, $F(3,204) = 19.265$, $p < .001$) above and beyond that explained by age and gender. These results suggest that, as predicted, there is a significantly negative relationship between SDO and microaggression recognition.

It was also hypothesized that MS would change the relationship between SDO and microaggression recognition such that the MS condition would be associated with less recognition. At the bivariate level, MS was not associated with microaggression recognition (see Hypothesis 1). Therefore, analyses exploring moderation were not warranted, and Hypothesis 3b was not supported.

Hypotheses 4a and 4b. It was hypothesized that higher endorsement of Awareness would be associated with more microaggression recognition (4a). To examine the unique contribution of Awareness on microaggression recognition after accounting for the impact of age and gender, a hierarchical multiple regression analysis was performed. Age and gender were entered in Step 1; Awareness was entered in Step 2. In Step 2, Awareness ($\beta = .464, p < .001$) was found to explain a significant proportion of variance in microaggression recognition ($R^2 = .445, F(3,204) = 54.465, p < .001$) above and beyond that explained by age and gender. These results suggest that, as predicted, there is a significantly positive relationship between Awareness and microaggression recognition.

It was also hypothesized that MS would change the relationship between Awareness and microaggression recognition such that the MS condition would be associated with less recognition. At the bivariate level, MS was not associated with microaggression recognition (see Hypothesis 1). Therefore, analyses exploring moderation were not warranted, and Hypothesis 4b was not supported.

Hypotheses 5a and 5b. It was hypothesized that higher endorsement of Perspective-Taking would be associated with more microaggression recognition (5a). To examine the unique contribution of Perspective-Taking on microaggression recognition after accounting for the impact of age and gender, a hierarchical multiple regression analysis was performed. Age and gender were entered in Step 1; Perspective-Taking was entered in Step 2. In Step 2, Perspective-Taking ($\beta = .209, p < .001$) was found to explain a significant proportion of variance in microaggression recognition ($R^2 = .114, F(3,204) = 8.738, p < .001$) above and beyond that explained by age and gender. These results

suggest that, as predicted, there is a significantly positive relationship between Perspective-Taking and microaggression recognition.

It was also hypothesized that MS would change the relationship between Perspective-Taking and microaggression recognition such that the MS condition would be associated with less recognition. At the bivariate level, MS was not associated with microaggression recognition (see Hypothesis 1). Therefore, analyses exploring moderation were not warranted, and Hypothesis 5b was not supported.

Hypotheses 6a and 6b. It was hypothesized that higher endorsement of Empathic Action would be associated with more microaggression recognition (6a). To examine the unique contribution of Empathic Action on microaggression recognition after accounting for the impact of age and gender, a hierarchical multiple regression analysis was performed. Age and gender were entered in Step 1; Empathic Action was entered in Step 2. In Step 2, Empathic Action ($\beta = .465, p < .001$) was found to explain a significant proportion of variance in microaggression recognition ($R^2 = .299, F(3,204) = 28.975, p < .001$) above and beyond that explained by age and gender. These results suggest that, as predicted, there is a significantly positive relationship between Empathic Action and microaggression recognition.

It was also hypothesized that MS would change the relationship between Empathic Action and microaggression recognition such that the MS condition would be associated with less recognition. At the bivariate level, MS was not associated with microaggression recognition (see Hypothesis 1). Therefore, analyses exploring moderation were not warranted, and Hypothesis 6b was not supported.

Post-Hoc Analyses. Significant correlations among most study variables emerged (see Table 6). The effect sizes of most of these correlations are moderate-to-large (Cohen, 1988). The correlations between SDO and ethnocultural empathy variables (specifically Awareness and Empathic Action) were particularly strong negative correlations. Significant correlations among study variables is concordant with recent research, which indicates that prejudicial attitudes tend to correlate and to comprise a latent variable (Akrami, Ekehammar, & Bergh, 2011; Backstrom & Bjorklund, 2007; McFarland, 2010).

To understand the relative importance of all study variables, a hierarchical linear regression was conducted. After age and gender were entered in Step 1 of the regression, each of the five main variables (BJW, SDO, Awareness, Perspective-Taking, and Empathic Action) were then entered in the model as separate steps in the aforementioned order, as there was no theoretical rationalization for entering the variables in the model differently. Using the enter method, it was found that, among study variables, awareness of contemporary racism and privilege (“Awareness”) explains the most variability in microaggression recognition ($\beta = .403, p < .001$). Age also significantly contributed to the final model ($\beta = -.013, p < .05$), such that younger participants were more likely to recognize microaggressions than were older participants. See Table 9.

Discussion

Summary of Results

This study had two primary objectives. First, it explored how personal variables may influence Whites’ recognition of racial microaggressions. These personal variables included Belief in a Just World (BJW), Social Dominance Orientation (SDO), and three facets of Ethnocultural Empathy (Awareness, Perspective-Taking, and Empathic Action).

Second, this study investigated how a situational factor – the presence or absence of mortality salience – may affect the aforementioned relationships. The current study integrated two fields of study (microaggressions and terror management theory) that have yet to be integrated and explored in great detail.

Analyses revealed that BJW, SDO, Awareness, Perspective-Taking, and Empathic Action each independently predicted Whites' recognition of racial microaggressions. Contrary to study hypotheses, there were no significant differences between the mortality salience group and control group on their recognition of racial microaggressions. Given that there was not a significant main effect between mortality salience condition and microaggression recognition, analyses exploring the potential moderating effects of mortality salience could not be conducted (and respective hypotheses related to moderation were not supported). In post-hoc analyses, Awareness (awareness of contemporary racism and privilege) emerged as the predominant predictive study variable. Notably, age was also found to be significantly predictive of microaggression recognition, such that younger individuals demonstrated greater recognition. These points are considered below in detail, and the study is reviewed for limitations and future directions.

Discussion of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1 posited that participants who were exposed to the mortality salience prime would recognize racial microaggressions significantly less than would participants in the control condition (who were exposed to a neutral prime). Contrary to this hypothesis, study results demonstrated no significant difference in microaggression recognition between experimental and control conditions. These findings are not

concordant with prior research utilizing a terror management theory framework, which has found that mortality salience leads to a predictable and discernible shift in the ways individuals perceive and respond to social situations involving out-group members (Florian & Mikulincer, 1997; Florian, Mikulincer, & Hirschberger, 2001; Rosenblatt et al., 1989).

This pattern of results may have emerged for a variety of reasons. First, and perhaps most simply, it is possible that mortality salience is actually unrelated to recognition of microaggressions. That is, the finding is an “accurate” portrayal of the “true” nature of the relationships among variables. This simple conclusion is undermined by the strong theoretical underpinnings of Hypothesis 1 and the empirical support for the dramatic impact mortality salience has on worldview defense (Greenberg et al., 1997; Parker & Taylor, 2015; Pyszczynski et al., 1999). Another possible explanation for the lack of support for Hypothesis 1 relates to methodology: The lack of an observed relationship between mortality salience and microaggression recognition may relate – at least in part – to the way in which microaggression recognition was measured. For instance, the way in which recognition was operationalized may not be adequately accounting for the quick and largely unconscious processes by which complex social judgments typically occur. Additionally, the scale (1-5) may not have been sensitive enough to discern slight (but significant) differences in perception and interpretation following mortality salience. A more thorough discussion of the limitations of the microaggressive vignettes is explored below.

Hypothesis 2 postulated that higher endorsement of BJW would be associated with less microaggression recognition (2a) and that mortality salience would moderate

the relationship between BJW and microaggression recognition (2b). Only Hypothesis 2a was supported: Greater belief in a just world (BJW) was associated with less racial microaggression recognition among respondents. This finding is concordant with Lerner's conceptualization of just world belief, which postulates that people who believe that good things happen to good people and bad things to bad people may struggle to negotiate the tension inherent in microaggressions (Lerner, 1980). That is, observing an individual being mistreated without provocation is difficult to reconcile with a belief that the world is just and fair. Discrimination – even subtle acts, like microaggressions – directly and immediately contradict BJW. In order to reconcile the distress (which is perhaps subtle and consciously imperceptible), individuals with high BJW may unconsciously seek to affirm their belief that the world is fair and just by diminishing the experiences of unfairness and injustice that many members of racial minorities express (Parker & Taylor, 2017). In this way, the study results indicate that participants may have engaged in what BJW theorists have deemed “nonrational strategies” such as denial, withdrawal, and victim-blaming to resolve the tension (Lerner & Simmons, 1966; Reichle, Schneider, & Montada, 1998; Wilkins & Wenger, 2014).

Theoretical understanding of BJW suggests that high BJW is not inherently problematic and that individuals enact a number of homeostasis-producing countermeasures to alleviate the dissonance it may create. The aforementioned nonrational strategies are not the only ways to manage the dissonance that emerges in the face of injustice. A more rational, conscious, and active strategy may be working productively to reduce the occurrence of injustice. Rather than fleeing from discomfort and tension, individuals with high BJW can learn to acknowledge their discomfort and

interpret the tension not as a threat to their meaning-making system, but rather as an opportunity to reconfigure the world around them in a way that is concordant with their beliefs. By intervening in unjust situations, they may inspire justice. By utilizing the power they harness by virtue of their privilege (i.e., race, skin color), they may minimize the burden that is placed on people of color to be responsible for addressing race-related issues that inevitably emerge in daily life. In this way, White people can assume the role of ally as they take action to promote social justice (Brown & Ostrove, 2013; Kivel, 2002). It may be fruitful for additional research to explore the ways in which high-BJW individuals can shift from utilizing nonrational strategies to rational strategies in order to manage the dissonance that emerges when they witness injustice.

The reorientation from denial and victim-blaming (nonrational strategies) to actions concordant with social justice (rational strategies) is a shift that is likely related to empathy. Essentially, empathy (general and/or ethnocultural) may constitute the driving force for a person to switch strategies. For instance, a person might be motivated to move from denial toward active participation in the dissolution of race-related injustice because of their empathic regard for targets/victims. Their empathy supersedes their inclination to ignore, deny, or minimize the unfair experience of others. In this way, empathy may be a critical concept in the discussion of BJW, specifically in regards to the transition from nonrational to rational strategies. A more extensive discussion of the role of ethnocultural empathy is detailed below.

To this point, the discussion of the connection between high BJW and low microaggression recognition has presupposed that participants' worldview (specifically, their BJW) was threatened by the presence of injustice, however small, and that the

difficulty reconciling this injustice with their perception of discrimination was overwhelming and led people to minimize or ignore the discrimination present in the interaction. Yet it is also possible that because the targets of microaggressions in the vignettes were members of the out-group (i.e., non-Whites), individuals with high BJW did not feel particularly threatened by the injustice at all. Prior research has indicated a pattern to this effect such that threats to just world beliefs are more powerful when targets/victims are members of the in-group rather than the out-group (Correia, Vala & Aguiar, 2007). If participants conceptualized the targets of the microaggressions in the vignettes as out-group members, it is possible that they did not feel much, if any, tension regarding their BJW and the reality of discrimination. In this case, the pattern of results may have emerged because of the perceived distance individuals felt from the targets. This distance could relate to low ethnocultural empathy, among perhaps a variety of other variables not explored in this study, such as attributional style. Suffice it to say, this finding opens up a variety of explanatory possibilities, and it would be a rich and valuable endeavor to gain more clarity regarding the specific processes White individuals with high BJW undergo when exposed to subtle discrimination of non-Whites.

Hypothesis 3 posited that higher endorsement of SDO would be associated with less recognition (3a) and that mortality salience would moderate this relationship (3b). Though moderation was not supported (3b), results indicate that high SDO endorsers demonstrate significantly less recognition of microaggressions than low SDO endorsers, as predicted (3a). High-SDO individuals are not perceiving and/or acknowledging subtle degradation of minority others. This failure of recognition is likely associated with high-SDO individuals' desire to maintain their dominant position relative to racial minorities in

the hierarchical power structure. By ignoring, minimizing, and marginalizing the plights of others, high-SDO individuals maintain power and status over groups they deem less valuable, while simultaneously affirming their superiority and prestige (Pratto et al., 1994). As previously discussed, high-SDO individuals are likely not only to prefer unequal power distributions that benefit them, but will attempt to maintain that dominance through denigration of low-status groups, including racial minorities (Levin et al. 2012). Denigration may be active and/or conscious (e.g. name-calling, discriminatory hiring practices, etc.) or passive and/or unintentional, such as failing to recognize or acknowledge microaggressions.

It is likely that SDO is negatively associated with microaggression recognition because recognition of microaggressions is contrary to the mission of high-SDO individuals. To recognize discrimination against a racial minority is to perceive and acknowledge unfair treatment toward a person based on his/her race. High-SDO individuals are not concerned about discrimination against out-groups because discrimination solidifies the power structure from which high-SDO endorsers benefit. Thus, it is likely that high-SDO individuals did not recognize microaggressions in this study because the subtle acts of discrimination they viewed were concordant with their worldview, which passively accepts and/or actively encourages the subordination and disempowerment of racial minority groups. The current results provide a valuable supplement to prior research regarding SDO and the way in which high-SDO endorsers attempt to maintain their dominant position relative to racial minorities.

Yet again (as with BJW), empathy may be playing a role in the observed relationship between SDO and microaggression recognition. Given that SDO is

negatively associated with empathy, it is possible that the association between high SDO and low microaggression recognition is related, at least in part, to low ethnocultural empathy (Pratto et al., 1994). Prior research has established that SDO and empathy are deeply connected, even at the neural level (Chiao, Mathur, Harada, & Lipke, 2009). The current study replicated the established association between SDO and empathy, as indicated by the significant negative correlations with large effect sizes that emerged between (a) SDO and Awareness and (b) SDO and Empathic Action (see Table 5). SDO and empathy may interact in a variety of ways. For example, high-SDO individuals may actively avoid encounters with oppressed others, thereby distancing themselves from interactions that would typically provoke empathy (Sidanius et al., 2013). High-SDO individuals have been shown to support policies that lead to a great deal of human suffering (e.g., war). As these individuals are open about their support for policies that necessarily impact others negatively, they may infer about themselves that they are not particularly empathic (Sidanius et al., 2013). Future analyses may investigate the potential mediating effect of ethnocultural empathy on the relationship between SDO and microaggression recognition.

Hypothesis 4 predicted that higher endorsement of the facet of ethnocultural empathy labeled “Awareness” (awareness of contemporary racism and privilege) would be associated with more microaggression recognition (4a) and that mortality salience would moderate the relationship between Awareness and microaggression recognition (4b). Again, although mortality salience as a moderator was not supported (4B), the importance of Awareness as it relates to microaggression recognition was a significant finding. Conceptually, individuals with high awareness of contemporary racism and

privilege recognized that some of the interracial interactions depicted in the microaggressive vignettes include content that was racially motivated. Extrapolated beyond the current study, high-Awareness individuals report that they recognize that racial differences are associated with differential treatment and outcomes in a variety of spheres of life in the United States. According to these results, individuals who are willing and/or able to recognize systems of power that benefit some and marginalize others are more likely to recognize racial microaggressions than are those individuals who are unwilling or unable to recognize such systems (Parker & Taylor, 2016). Some evidence has emerged that indicates Awareness is amenable to increase following intervention. A study examining the effect of a diversity workshop on ethnocultural empathy demonstrated significantly higher participant Awareness scores at one-week and one-month post-test intervals as compared to pre-test scores (Fleming, Thomas, Burnham, Charles, & Shaw, 2015).

Hypothesis 5 predicted that higher endorsement of empathic perspective-taking (“Perspective-Taking”) would be associated with more microaggression recognition (5a) and that mortality salience would moderate this relationship (5b). Moderation was not supported (5b). However, study results suggest that Perspective-Taking was significantly and positively associated with microaggression recognition. When individuals have the desire and exert the effort to understand the experiences, thoughts, and emotions of people with different ethnic backgrounds, recognition of race-related oppression is more likely.

Hypothesis 6 postulated that higher endorsement of empathic feeling and acting as an ally (“Empathic Action”) would be associated with more microaggression

recognition (6a) and that mortality salience moderated the relationship between Empathic Action and microaggression recognition (6b). Though Hypothesis 6b was not supported, Hypothesis 6a was supported: More Empathic Action was associated with greater recognition of racial microaggressions. As the name suggests, empathic feeling and acting as an ally is the facet of ethnocultural empathy that differentiates allies from non-allies. An ally shows “active support of and effort to speak out for and stand up for others and work to change the status quo” (Roades & Mio, 2000, p. 65). This facet involves emotional connectedness to members of other racial and ethnic groups, and behavioral responsiveness to unjust situations in social environments. It is perhaps unsurprising that high Empathic Action was so strongly associated with microaggression recognition. Individuals who were high on Empathic Action view themselves as being emotionally and behaviorally responsive to racial prejudice and discrimination. The enactment of empathy – transitioning what is an internal experience to an external one – is powerful, and an imperative among individuals who take a social justice perspective. Within multicultural psychology, participating in outreach, advocacy, and public policy is an encouraged professional practice (Ratts, Toporek, & Lewis, 2010).

Empathic Action requires Awareness and Perspective-Taking, suggesting that ethnocultural empathy may be developed in a step-wise fashion. Interestingly, however, a different pattern emerges upon review of the means for each of the three scales of ethnocultural empathy. The overall mean was highest for the Empathic Action subscale, followed by Awareness and Perspective-Taking (see Table 4). Thus, overall, respondents identified Empathic Action as their “strongest” facet of ethnocultural empathy, which does not adhere to a step-wise development across Awareness, Perspective-Taking, and

Empathic Action. These data may suggest that ethnocultural empathy development does not necessarily occur in a single, linear manner.

Ethnocultural empathy encourages positive intergroup cognitions and actions, and is a substantive contributor toward to the dissolution of injustice (Batson et al., 1997).

One explanation for the way in which ethnocultural empathy functions in this way is that empathy may reduce feelings of dissimilarity and, concordantly, threat with “out-group” members (Stephan & Finlay, 1999). These study findings suggest that understanding how others view the world truly has a substantive impact on the ability, willingness, and/or desire to acknowledge subtle acts of discrimination. Results point toward the urgency of developing an intervention to increase ethnocultural empathy among Whites.

Specifically, the finding that the Awareness variable (a facet of ethnocultural empathy) emerged as the study variable that explained the most amount of variance in microaggression recognition speaks to the importance of acknowledging that systems of power privilege some groups and oppress others.

The three facets of ethnocultural empathy explored in the current study comprise three separate components: (a) awareness of contemporary racism and privilege, (b) cognitive perspective-taking, and (c) empathic feeling and acting as an ally. Though all variables were significantly correlated with one another and are conceptually united under the umbrella of ethnocultural empathy, prior research suggests that they are distinct concepts and may be utilized most effectively in different contexts. For instance, one study differentiated perspective-taking and empathy, noting that perspective-taking involves utilizing a cognitive capacity to view the world from another’s vantage point, whereas empathic responsiveness relates to the affective ability to relate emotionally to

others (Gilin, Maddux, Carpenter, & Galinsky, 2013). When study participants underwent a strategic task, perspective-taking was more effective in driving successful outcomes. However, in a relationship-based game that required identifying the strength of interpersonal connections, empathy produced stronger accuracy in emotional understanding. These findings suggest that situational context may pull for or require different empathic strategies. Consequently, the extent to which individuals can diversify their empathic “toolbox” may relate to their ability to flexibly respond to the empathy-inducing situations they encounter.

Participant age also emerged as significantly and negatively associated with microaggression recognition. Younger respondents were more likely to recognize racial microaggressions as compared to older respondents. This is an interesting pattern of results that is likely related to a cohort effect. Today’s young and old people grew up in drastically different cultural contexts with regard to race and racial relations. Historically, racism was more overt. Older respondents may have personally experienced a time in which institutionalized racial segregation and the use of racial slurs, for instance, were not only socially acceptable, but commonplace; older respondents may conceptualize racism as more overt, and may struggle to perceive or understand the “micro” expression of discrimination as it currently exists. While overt discrimination has not disappeared, the more common current manifestations are subtle, covert, and more implicit (i.e., racial microaggressions; Duckitt, 1992; Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986; Kunda, 1999). Younger respondents in the present study may have been better equipped to recognize and/or identify this subtle racism because they grew up at a time when this type of discrimination was pervasive.

Clinical Considerations

The current finding that ethnocultural empathy – and specifically awareness of contemporary racism and privilege – is an important factor driving Whites’ recognition of racial microaggressions has several clinical implications. First, the need to foster general empathic responsiveness among races is strongly indicated. One well-documented way to build empathy among groups is through high-quality, meaningful, goal-driven contact (Allport, 1954). To the extent possible, minimizing racial division (physical, social, and emotional) may encourage integration, reconciliation, and empathy. Results also point to the continued and urgent need to develop an intervention that deepens Whites’ understanding of race-related oppression and privilege. Evidence suggests that an intervention such as a workshop can be effective in increasing levels of ethnocultural empathy (Fleming et al., 2015).

Content for the proposed intervention may include prompts and activities to help participants explore their social identities and how those identities may affect their interactions with members of other social-identity groups (Fleming et al., 2015). A historical review of race in the United States might be included, with accompanying data (e.g., statistics, statements and written narratives/texts from people of color) to illustrate the ongoing effects and iterations of racism and discrimination. The costs of racism to racial minorities and to Whites should also be explored (Spanierman & Heppner, 2004). Elucidating the ways in which racism hurts individuals and society is likely to deepen Whites’ awareness of racism and their own racial privilege. Additional content may include emphasizing commonalities (e.g., the shared humanity) among different racial groups while also acknowledging, honoring, and respecting racial identities and history.

Curriculum may also include an exploration of the emergence of colorblindness as a response to racism, and the ways in which colorblindness can be deeply dismissive of others' core identities and is not associated with reduced prejudice and racism (Gold & Taylor, 2013; Williams, 2011). An experiential component that encourages participants to immerse themselves in new cross-cultural/interracial experiences and to reflect on these experiences may provide an opportunity for Whites to expand their interracial contact and deepen their ability to cognitively and affectively connect with individuals they may consider to be members of out-groups.

Previously established interventions targeted toward enhancement of empathic concern and perspective-taking toward minority groups have been found to reduce prejudice expression (Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000; Paluck & Green, 2009; Todd, Bodenhausen, Richeson, & Galinsky, 2011). In a variety of settings and across demographic groups, instructing participants to imagine the physical pain or emotional feelings of others was effective in inducing more empathic behaviors (Drwecki, Moore, Ward, & Prkachin, 2011; Sierksma, Thijs, & Verkuijten, 2015). Therefore, continued integration of perspective-taking exercises is likely to be fruitful. Relatedly, research has indicated that a specific therapeutic modality - Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) – promotes psychological flexibility through its focus on acceptance, mindfulness, and values-based approaches, and has promise in potential application toward prejudicial attitudes and prejudice-related personality factors (Hayes et al., 2004; Levin et al., 2016; Lillis & Hayes, 2007). Some evidence also suggests that incorporating an existential-humanistic perspective can reduce adherence to racist ideology (Hoffman, Granger, Vallejos, & Moats, 2016).

Evidence suggests that Whites may initially struggle to acknowledge racism and to engage in meaningful and often difficult discussions about race and privilege, perhaps because engaging in these thought processes and discussions has not been integral to their attainment of social status, material rewards, and physical safety (evidence of their racial privilege; Sue et al., 2010; Sue & Constantine, 2007; Wong et al., 2014; Young, 2003). While people of color are typically socialized to develop protective mechanisms for managing racism and discrimination, Whites are generally not as well equipped to cope effectively in the face of race-related stress (Brown & Krishnakumar, 2007; McHale et al., 2006). Thus, it is likely and reasonable to assume that many Whites are not well practiced in thinking or talking critically about race. Efforts should be undertaken to preempt defensiveness, which is a common response Whites demonstrate when confronted with their own racial privilege (Ninivaggi, 2001). Anticipating, identifying, normalizing, and eventually challenging defensiveness is warranted. Furthermore, ethnocultural empathy-building interventions should include a portion on coping and self-care. Emphasizing the importance of coping would help Whites to establish an empathic approach that is sustainable.

Acknowledging the costs of empathy-building is essential in the movement toward helping others be more ethnoculturally empathic. While increasing empathy is understood to be a positive, prosocial, desirable outcome for individuals and society as a whole, it must also be acknowledged that there are costs of empathy (Manczak, DeLongis, & Chen, 2016). Time and effort are expended, and risk is undertaken when individuals strive toward adopting a social justice perspective. Consider, for instance, mental health care providers are generally empathic individuals with intense and

prolonged exposure to clients' stress, including but not limited to trauma, depression, anxiety, socioeconomic stressors, and drug/substance difficulties. Empathy coupled with continued exposure to others' challenges has been shown to lead to psychological problems among providers, such as burnout, compassion fatigue, and vicarious trauma (Craig & Sprang, 2010). Recognizing and acknowledging systems of privilege and oppression, putting oneself in others' shoes, and working to advocate for disempowered others is challenging: It may cause stress, sadness, anger, guilt, confusion, and other intrapsychic experiences that are not pleasurable and reinforcing. Risks to empathy include the potential for social exclusion. Asserting a social justice perspective in some social circles may be counter-cultural, and negative social repercussions may ensue. As such, individuals who are endeavoring to grow and develop their ethnocultural empathy may struggle in a variety of ways before, while, and after they experience the gratification associated with helping others. Being honest with Whites about the potential downfalls is proper psychoeducation and may help Whites prepare for the challenges they are likely to face as they transition toward a social justice perspective.

Empathy-building interventions exert demands not only on participants, but also on the individuals such as psychologists, clinicians, and other practitioners who are coordinating and facilitating such interventions. A thorough review of Carl Rogers's seminal work regarding the necessary and sufficient conditions of therapeutic change is likely to be foundational in guiding providers' efforts (Rogers, 1957). Clinicians and other professionals enacting an empathy-building intervention must "meet clients where they are" by utilizing a warm and accepting approach to help Whites learn about the world and reorient themselves in ways that may be new and threatening. Being genuine,

maintaining unconditional positive regard, and drawing upon one's own empathy is likely to support the overall goals of the intervention.

Finally, the finding that age is significantly associated with microaggression recognition may have implications for the time at which an intervention may be most beneficial. Research exploring racial identity development in children suggests that childhood is a time of tremendous growth with regard to recognizing racial differences and attributing meaning to those differences (Swanson, Cunningham, Youngblood, & Spencer, 2009). Developmentally, perhaps, the most effective intervention to help White people to build empathy for other racial groups and to learn about racism, privilege, and oppression may occur in childhood or adolescence. This is not to say that interventions could not or would not be successful when targeted toward an adult or geriatric population. Rather, what the results may suggest is that interventions may need to be tailored based on age and/or cohort. Looking toward the not-so-distant future, in which the demographics will shift from predominantly White to predominantly non-White, it behooves clinicians and researchers to consider how population changes will also affect the dynamics that emerge between Whites and non-Whites in the coming years (Colby & Ortman, 2015).

Experimental Considerations, Context, Limitations, and Future Directions

Experimental Considerations. The mere measurement effect may have been at play in the current experiment: For instance, it is possible that administration of the study questionnaires (and the microaggression recognition task, specifically) was itself an intervention in building Awareness among participants (Morwitz & Fitzsimons, 2004). By presenting race-related material and a concurrent opportunity to rate the racial

motivation of the interaction, the implicit message across several vignettes is that some content is racially motivated. Respondents may have been more likely to identify vignettes as being racially motivated than they would had the option to provide that feedback not been so clearly linked to the vignettes. Thus, the mere measurement of racial microaggressions (as it was conceived in this study) may have affected the results.

Relatedly, the observer effect – common in social psychological research – may have also been invoked. To the extent that participants were aware of the socially desirable response and felt invested in being viewed by the experimenter (or maintaining a self-image) as socially desirable, participants may have consciously or unconsciously modified their responses to reflect how they would like to be seen rather than how they actually are. Note that in the context of this study, it is difficult to discern the potential directionality of the observer effect on the data, as the endorsements that individuals might consider socially desirable may differ depending on their social context and values.

It is also possible that the Awareness facet of ethnocultural empathy was found to be so closely associated with microaggression recognition because the measures were assessing the same construct. In other words, the microaggression recognition task may be a proxy for Awareness rather than an altogether separate construct that is meaningfully related to Awareness. If this is the case, the connection that emerged in the results is not an indicator of the relatedness of the two concepts (Awareness and microaggression recognition), but perhaps an indication that they are the same concept measured in two different ways. Continued research with particular attention on the way in which measurement of racial microaggressions is conceptualized is likely to provide more

clarity about whether Awareness and microaggression recognition are one or two constructs.

Context. Data were collected in February 2016, in the midst of a variety of highly publicized and polarizing race-related events. The ongoing discussion of police brutality against African Americans continued building momentum as individuals such as Samuel Dubose in Ohio, Freddie Gray in Baltimore, and Walter Scott in South Carolina were victimized in high-profile incidents (Blow, 2015; Smith & Lucas, 2015; Watkins, 2015). Campus-related racism was national news as the football team at the University of Missouri refused to play a game in opposition of the university president's management of racial issues in late 2015 (Hartocollis & Bidgood, 2015; Tracy & Southall, 2015). Perhaps most notably, a highly racially divisive presidential campaign was underway and on the forefront of news cycles and media outlets (Burns, 2015).

These and other racial issues that were present at the time of data collection may have had at least two major opposite but concurrent effects on Whites' thoughts regarding race in America: (a) publicizing race-related discrimination and maltreatment such that Whites were more aware of and sensitized to the race-related stressors that racial minorities experience and (b) unearthing a great deal of white racial superiority such that Whites felt more comfortable expressing views that were openly hostile to certain racial or ethnic groups and/or became fatigued with the standard of "political correctness" and attentiveness to issues of race (Kauffman, 2016; Porter, 2016; Schwartzman, 2016). With regard to the first point, the prevalence of social media provided a popular and easily accessible forum through which a variety of experiences could be witnessed and disseminated (Healy & Hannah-Jones, 2016). Social movements

could be more easily coordinated. Essentially, the access and exposure White Americans had to the experiences of racial minorities had increased, potentially enabling many to understand a side of American culture that was once invisible to them. With regard to the second point, throughout the United States, many Whites expressed an appreciation for being able to say “what they really think,” suggesting that what was once socially inappropriate had transferred into a socially appropriate realm (Tumulty & Johnson, 2016). Many may have become fatigued with learning about and discussing race and racism (Flynn, 2015). Changing social norms and the pre-existing negative associations with racial minorities may have coalesced to encourage more overt racism and dismissal of race-related concerns may be people of color and their allies.

The premise for microaggressions – that overt forms of oppression are not socially sanctioned, so more covert forms have emerged – thus is called into question. It is possible that the social tide was (and is) moving back toward acceptance of overt discrimination. For example, anti-Muslim hate crimes have surged since 2015, believed to be fueled by anti-Muslim rhetoric espoused during the presidential campaign (Potok, 2016). At the period in time in which these data were collected, racial tension had been downplayed for a long time (e.g. identifying Americans society as “post-racial”). Many members of the public may have felt racial barriers had been eliminated and racial issues were less frequent, severe, and impactful than they once were (Helms, 2015). President Barack Obama’s election apparently constituted the clearest moment of racial progression, and may have obscured, for many, the ways in which racial progress was not taking place (Lozada, 2016). Thus, counterintuitively, the election of a Black President may have reduced the extent to which racial issues and tension were addressed.

It is possible – if not likely – that the social context may have influenced the results of this study. For example, it is possible that individuals who had generally been high in SDO expressed even more adherence to a social dominance orientation, following evidence of what they perceived as minorities “stepping out of line” (e.g., interpreting Black university football players’ protests as refusing to play despite contractual obligations to do so). Or perhaps some individuals who had embraced a high belief in a just world (BJW) struggled to reconcile that belief with the onslaught of current events in which injustice and unfairness appeared to prevail. In essence, the period of data collection was rife with so much race-related content that the data may represent individuals at a time of transformation, one way or the other. The constructs explored in the study, though generally stable, are not immovable, and it is worthwhile to consider the ways in which social context may have affected respondents’ data.

Limitations & Future Directions. The present study had several limitations. First, the data are completely self-report rather than behavioral or physiological. Therefore, the results do not necessarily indicate what each individual would think or do in a given situation, but rather what they *say* they would think or do. In the social sciences, the gap between self-report and observed behavior may be significant (Dovidio, 2001). Another limitation is that all data were collected online, which limited the investigator’s oversight of participants’ behavior and environment during the study. It is possible, for instance, that participants took breaks and/or experienced interruptions while completing study-related tasks. Even so, a great deal of evidence has amassed indicating that there are no significant differences between within-laboratory administration and Internet-administered questionnaires (Gosling, Vazire, Srivastava, & John, 2004; Krantz

& Dalal, 2000; Miller et al., 2002). Nonetheless, it may be fruitful for future research to explore behavioral and/or physiological measures of microaggression recognition and/or responsiveness.

Additionally, a general weakness of quantitative research is that many kinds of information are difficult to obtain through structured data collection instruments. Although the majority of measures used in this study have been well-validated in the literature, a valid and reliable measure for the recognition of microaggressions does not yet exist. As a result, we operationalized microaggression recognition as the judgment that racial motivations played a role in observed social interactions. Though this measure provides meaningful information about microaggression recognition, it is important to address what this measure does not provide. The current study conceived of the recognition of microaggressions as a continuous variable. The variable is not dichotomized by labeling each individual as having either recognized or not recognized a microaggression occurred. This is a subtle, but important distinction. What it means, practically, is that – given current data – it cannot be concluded that the level of recognition of racial microaggressions reached a threshold that is practically meaningful (i.e. that would lead an individual to take pause or to interject in the social interaction). In this way, increased recognition of microaggressions does not imply “adequate” or practically meaningful recognition. It is unclear how we might reasonably ascertain the point along a Likert scale in which functional non-recognition shifts to recognition. As a result, we can only be confident in regards to more or less recognition rather than certain recognition or lack of recognition. Future research should continue to seek better understanding of Whites' recognition of microaggressions. Perhaps most notably for

research purposes, additional work is needed in regards to developing measures for recognition of microaggressions.

Another limitation regarding the recognition of microaggression measure relates to the limitations of all written vignettes that attempt to convey a social situation. Although the vignettes used to assess recognition of microaggressions effectively communicated relevant content, a written vignette detailing a social interaction may not include the social nuances evident in actual personal interaction. With the vignettes, individuals did not have the benefit of context, tone of voice, posturing, and other nonverbal communication signals between the characters. As a result, it is possible that the processes participants utilized to assess the social characteristics of these written interactions differs considerably from the processes utilized to assess characteristics of actual social situations. In this way, participants may have responded to this task in an intellectual, cognitive way rather than in a manner that is more representative of typical social processing, which consciously and unconsciously takes numerous variables into account in the formulation of impressions and judgments. As such, evaluating the ways in which intellectual recognition of the racial motivations underlying some social situations relates to emotional interpretation and - perhaps most importantly - action would be valuable in terms of future directions.

While the sample in this study were diverse with respect to age, socioeconomic status, educational attainment, and reported income, more effort to understand the richness of diversity among Whites is indicated. Deeper understanding of the processes by which dominant racial group members - in this case, Whites in the United States -

may perceive and interpret racial microaggressions is an area of future research that is needed.

Conclusion

This study investigated the impact of personal and situational variables on Whites' recognition of racial microaggressions. White adults throughout the United States were randomized to one of two conditions: the experimental group in which a prime eliciting mortality salience was presented, and a control group in which a neutral prime that did not elicit mortality salience was presented. Participants in this study were asked to complete a variety of assessment measures related to belief in a just world, social dominance orientation, ethnocultural empathy, and demographic variables. They also reported their impression of several interracial/interethnic vignettes, some of which had microaggressions embedded within them. Limitations include that the data is entirely self-report and that the measurement of racial microaggressions has yet to be established with a reliable and valid measure.

The findings of this study were mixed and require further future exploration. Although the experimental and control groups did not differ from one another with regard to their recognition of racial microaggressions, there were significant main effects of the independent variables on microaggression recognition. Notably, when each of the significant contributors were entered into the same statistical model, awareness of contemporary racism and privilege emerged as the most significant predictor of Whites' recognition of racial microaggressions.

Overall, this study contributes to the understanding of Whites' perception and interpretation of racial microaggressions. Future research should continue to explore the

personal and situational variables that may affect Whites' recognition of and response to racial microaggressions. In addition, future studies would benefit from developing a well-validated measure of microaggression recognition.

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Appendices

Appendix A

General Belief in a Just World Scale (GB-JWS)

(Dalbert, 2000; Dalbert et al., 1987)

Below you will find various statements. Most likely, you will strongly agree with some statements, and strongly disagree with others. Sometimes you may feel more neutral. Read each statement carefully and decide to what extent you personally agree or disagree with it. Circle the number which corresponds to this judgment. Make sure you circle a number for every statement.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

1. I think basically the world is a just place.
2. I believe that, by and large, people get what they deserve.
3. I am confident that justice always prevails over injustice.
4. I am convinced that in the long run people will be compensated for injustices.
5. I firmly believe that injustices in all areas of life (e.g., professional, family, politics) are the exception rather than the rule.
6. I think people try to be fair when making important decisions.

Appendix B**Social Dominance Orientation Scale (SDOS)
(Pratto et al., 1994)**

Indicate your agreement with the following statements. Use the following scale to respond to each statement. Please do not leave any statements unanswered.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

1. Some groups of people are simply inferior to other groups.
2. In getting what you want, it is sometimes necessary to use force against other groups.
3. It's OK if some groups have more of a chance in life than others.
4. To get ahead in life, it is sometimes necessary to step on other groups.
5. If certain groups stayed in their place, we would have fewer problems.
6. It's probably a good thing that certain groups are at the top and other groups are at the bottom.
7. Inferior groups should stay in their place.
8. Sometimes other groups must be kept in their place.
9. It would be good if groups could be equal.
10. Group equality should be our ideal.
11. All groups should be given an equal chance in life.
12. We should do what we can to equalize conditions for different groups.
13. Increased social equality is beneficial to society.
14. We would have fewer problems if we treated people more equally.
15. We should strive to make incomes as equal as possible.
16. No one group should dominate in society.

Appendix C

Everyday Multicultural Competencies/Revised Scale of Ethnocultural Empathy (EMC/RSEE)

(Mallinckrodt et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2003)

This scale includes six subscales, though only three were used for the current study:

Factor 4: Empathic Perspective-Taking (“Perspective-Taking”)

5 items, $\alpha = .69$, Items 4, 10(r), 16(r), 22, 28(r)

Factor 5: Awareness of Contemporary Racism and Privilege (“Awareness”)

8 items, $\alpha = .79$, Items 5, 11, 17, 23, 29, 34, 39(r), 43(r)

Factor 6: Empathic Feeling and Acting as an Ally (“Empathic Action”)

8 items, $\alpha = .81$, Items 6(r), 12, 18, 24, 30(r), 35, 40, 44

(r) indicates that items were reverse-coded.

Instructions: The statements below are opinions you may have heard expressed at one time or another. Please indicate your current level of agreement with each statement using the following scale.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree

1. I think it is important to be educated about cultures and countries other than my own.
2. Members of minorities tend to overreact all the time.
3. I feel uncomfortable when interacting with people from different cultures.
4. It is easy for me to understand what it would feel like to be a person of another racial or ethnic background other than my own.
5. The U.S. has a long way to go before everyone is truly treated equally.
6. I don't care if people make racist statements against other racial or ethnic groups.
7. I welcome the possibility that getting to know another culture might have a deep positive influence on me.

8. When in America, minorities should make an effort to merge into American culture.
9. I often find myself fearful of people of other races.
10. It is difficult for me to put myself in the shoes of someone who is racially and/or ethnically different from me.
11. For two babies born with the same potential in the U.S. today, in general it is still more difficult for a child of color to succeed than a White child.
12. I get disturbed when other people experience misfortunes due to their racial or ethnic background.
13. I admire the beauty in other cultures.
14. I do not understand why minority people need their own TV channels.
15. I doubt that I can have a deep or strong friendship with people who are culturally different.
16. It is difficult for me to relate to stories in which people talk about racial or ethnic discrimination they experience in their day to day lives.
17. I can see how other racial or ethnic groups are systematically oppressed in our society.
18. I am touched by movies or books about discrimination issues faced by racial or ethnic groups other than my own.
19. I would like to work in an organization where I get to work with individuals from diverse backgrounds.
20. I fail to understand why members from minority groups complain about being alienated.
21. I really don't know how to go about making friends with someone from a different culture.
22. I can relate to the frustration that some people feel about having fewer opportunities due to their racial or ethnic backgrounds.
23. Today in the U.S, White people still have many important advantages compared to other ethnic groups.
24. I share the anger of people who are victims of hate crimes (e.g., intentional violence because of race or ethnicity).

25. I would like to have dinner at someone's house who is from a different culture.
26. I feel irritated when people of different racial or ethnic backgrounds speak their language around me.
27. I am afraid that new cultural experiences might risk losing my own identity.
28. I don't know a lot of information about important social and political events of racial and ethnic groups other than my own.
29. I am aware of how society differentially treats racial or ethnic groups other than my own.
30. I rarely think about the impact of a racist or ethnic joke on the feelings of people who are targeted.
31. I am interested in participating in various cultural activities on campus.
32. Minorities get in to school easier and some get away with minimal effort.
33. I do not know how to find out what is going on in other countries.
34. I am aware of institutional barriers (e.g., restricted opportunities for job promotion) that discriminate against racial or ethnic groups other than my own.
35. When I hear people make racist jokes, I tell them I am offended even though they are not referring to my racial or ethnic group.
36. Most Americans would be better off if they knew more about the cultures of other countries.
37. I am really worried about White people in the U.S. soon becoming a minority due to so many immigrants.
38. I am not reluctant to work with others from different cultures in class activities or team projects.
39. Racism is mostly a thing of the past.
40. When I see people who come from a different racial or ethnic background succeed in the public arena, I share their pride.
41. A truly good education requires knowing how to communicate with someone from another culture.
42. I think American culture is the best culture.

43. In America everyone has an equal opportunity for success.
44. When I know my friends are treated unfairly because of their racial or ethnic backgrounds, I speak up for them.
45. I welcome being strongly influenced by my contact with people from other cultures.
46. I think members of the minority blame White people too much for their misfortunes.
47. I believe the United States is enhanced by other cultures.
48. People who talk with an accent should work harder to speak proper English.

Appendix D

Mortality Salience and Control Primes

Mortality Salience Experimental Manipulation:

On this page, there are two open-ended questions. Please respond to them with your first, natural responses.

We are looking for peoples' gut-level reactions to these questions.

The Projective Life Attitudes Assessment

This assessment is a recently developed, innovative personality assessment. Recent research suggests that feelings and attitudes about significant aspects of life tell us a considerable amount about the individual's personality. Your responses to this survey will be content-analyzed in order to assess certain dimensions of your personality. Your honest responses to the following questions will be appreciated.

1. Please briefly describe the emotions that the thought of your own death arouses in you.
2. What do you think happens to you as you physically die and once you are physically dead?

Control Group Experimental Prime:

On this page, there are two open-ended questions. Please respond to them with your first, natural responses.

We are looking for peoples' gut-level reactions to these questions.

The Projective Life Attitudes Assessment

This assessment is a recently developed, innovative personality assessment. Recent research suggests that feelings and attitudes about significant aspects of life tell us a considerable amount about the individual's personality. Your responses to this survey will be content-analyzed in order to assess certain dimensions of your personality. Your honest responses to the following questions will be appreciated.

1. Please briefly describe the emotions that the thought of watching television arouses in you.
2. What do you think happens to you, physically, as you watch TV and once you are physically done watching it?

Appendix E

Filler Measures

The Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS; Watson et al., 1988)

This scale consists of a number of words that describe different feelings and emotions. Read each item and then list the number from the scale below next to each word.

Indicate to what extent you feel this way right now, that is, at the present moment.

1	2	3	4	5
Very Slightly or Not at All	A Little	Moderately	Quite a Bit	Extremely

- | | |
|-----------------|----------------|
| 1. Interested | 11. Irritable |
| 2. Distressed | 12. Alert |
| 3. Excited | 13. Ashamed |
| 4. Upset | 14. Inspired |
| 5. Strong | 15. Nervous |
| 6. Guilty | 16. Determined |
| 7. Scared | 17. Attentive |
| 8. Hostile | 18. Jittery |
| 9. Enthusiastic | 19. Active |
| 10. Proud | 20. Afraid |

"The Growing Stone" Reading Excerpt from *Exile and the Kingdom* (Camus, 1957)

The personality portion of the survey is over. Now, we would like you to complete a few different attitude tasks. As was stated earlier, research suggests that attitudes and perceptions about even very common everyday items may be related to basic personality characteristics. To further examine this idea, we would like you to complete the opinion questionnaires on the following pages with your most natural response.

Please follow the instructions provided and complete the questionnaires in the order they are presented. That is, do not skip around.

Opinion Questionnaire 1: Literature

Please read the following short passage from a novel and answer the questions below it.

The automobile swung clumsily around the curve in the red sandstone trail, now a mass of mud. The headlights suddenly picked out in the night—first on one side of the road, then on the other—two wooden huts with sheet metal roofs. On the right near the second one, a tower of course beams could be made out in the light fog. From the top of the tower a metal cable, invisible at its starting-point, shone as it sloped down into the light from the car before disappearing behind the embankment that blocked the road. The car slowed down and stopped a few yards from the huts.

The man who emerged from the seat to the right of the driver labored to extricate himself from the car. As he stood up, his huge, broad frame lurched a little. In the shadow beside the car, solidly planted on the ground and weighed down by fatigue, he seemed to be listening to the idling motor. Then he walked in the direction of the embankment and entered the cone of light from the headlights. He stopped at the top of the slope, his broad back outlined against the darkness. After a moment he turned around. In the light from the dashboard he could see the chauffeur's face, smiling. The man signaled and the chauffeur turned off the motor. At once a vast cool silence fell over the trail and the forest. Then the sound of the water could be heard.

The man looked at the river below him, visible solely as a broad dark motion flecked with occasional shimmers. A denser motionless darkness, far beyond, must be the other bank. By looking fixedly, however, one could see on that still bank a yellowish light like an oil lamp in the distance. The big man turned back toward the car and nodded. The chauffeur switched off the lights, turned them on again, then blinked them regularly. On the embankment the man appeared and disappeared, taller and more massive each time he came back to life. Suddenly, on the other bank of the river, a lantern held up by an invisible arm back and forth several times. At a final signal from the lookout, the man disappeared into the night. With the lights out, the river was shining intermittently. On each side of the road, the dark masses of forest foliage stood out against the sky and seemed very near. The fine rain that had soaked the trail an hour earlier was still hovering in the warm air, intensifying the silence and immobility of this broad clearing in the virgin forest. In the black sky misty stars flickered.

How do you feel about the overall descriptive qualities of the story?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Not at all descriptive				Somewhat descriptive				Very descriptive

Do you think the author of this story is male or female?

_____ male _____ female

Appendix F

Recognition of Racial Microaggressions - Vignettes

Please rate this interaction on the following scales:

Not offensive	1	2	3	4	5	Offensive
Comfortable	1	2	3	4	5	Uncomfortable
Friendly	1	2	3	4	5	Unfriendly
Socially appropriate	1	2	3	4	5	Socially inappropriate
Not racially motivated	1	2	3	4	5	Racially motivated

Microaggressive Vignettes

1. Steven: Hey, man.

Michael: Hey! Whoa, nice hair! What a change.

Steven: Yeah, I felt like switching it up a little bit.

Michael: Well, it looks good. Cutting off that Afro makes you look more professional.

2. Fahima: Excuse me, I'm a new student on campus. Can you please show me where the Muslim Student Center is?

Stephanie: Oh, sure. It's two buildings down on your left. Say, where are you from?

Fahima: I'm from Chicago.

Stephanie: I meant, where were you born?

Fahima: Chicago.

3. Donna: Did you see that show last night? It was all about how problematic one-parent households are for the growth and development of young children. It's crazy how dads can just abandon their kids.

Latrice: Yeah, that sounds horrible.

Donna: And it's especially problematic in the black community. I mean, black men are all about drugs and crime. They can't take care of their responsibilities!

Latrice: That may be a problem for some black men, but not all. Or even most. My dad was always around. He's an accountant – not into drugs or any of that.

Donna: Yeah, yeah. I mean, you and your family are different. You aren't like most black people.

4. Demetrius: Getting excited for the baby? You're going to be a father soon!

Juan: I know, man. It's hard to believe sometimes. Laurie and I have been talking a lot about how to raise him, and we can't agree on whether or not to teach him Spanish. I'm fluent, and it's important to me to pass on my cultural heritage by speaking Spanish around him. But Laurie is afraid that she won't understand our conversations and will be left out.

Demetrius: That's tough. It's cool that you can speak Spanish, but we're in America. You've gotta just accept the way things are done here, and English is the way to go.

Non-Microaggressive Vignettes

5. Ming-Ho: I'm having some trouble with #3 on the stats homework due tomorrow. Were you able to figure it out?

Jonathan: Yeah.

Ming-Ho: Could you maybe help me with it? I'm really stuck. Like, here, why would this variable be four if...

Jonathan: Ming-Ho, It's not really a good time right now. I wish you'd stop bothering me.

Ming-Ho: Ok, geez. I guess I'll just talk to you later.

6. Rebecca: Argh! I hate filling out the Census. These little boxes just don't work for me!

Joe: What do you mean?

Rebecca: Well, I don't really fit into any of these racial categories. I don't know how to fill out this paperwork.

Joe: Yeah, I can see how that would be difficult. I guess I've never really thought about how difficult that would be. Both my parents are White, so that kind of stuff has never been hard.

Appendix G

1. How old are you? [drop-down menu]
2. What sex are you?
 - Male
 - Female
 - Other: Please specify _____
3. What is your race?
 - Asian or Asian American, including Chinese, Japanese, and others
 - Black or African American
 - Hispanic or Latino, including Mexican American, Central American, and others
 - White, Caucasian, Anglo, European American; not Hispanic
 - American Indian/Native American
 - Mixed; Parents are from two or more different groups (specify): _____
 - Other: _____
4. What is the highest degree you have completed?
 - Some high school
 - High school graduate
 - GED
 - Associate's degree
 - Some college
 - Bachelor's degree
 - Advanced degree (MA, Ph.D., MD, etc.)
5. What is your country of origin? [drop-down menu]
6. What state do you live in currently? [drop-down menu]
7. How important is religion in your life?

<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all important	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat important
<input type="checkbox"/> Moderately unimportant	<input type="checkbox"/> Moderately important
<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat unimportant	<input type="checkbox"/> Very much important
8. How important is spirituality in your life?

<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all important	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat important
<input type="checkbox"/> Moderately unimportant	<input type="checkbox"/> Moderately important
<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat unimportant	<input type="checkbox"/> Very much important
9. What is your annual household income?

<input type="checkbox"/> Less than \$20,000	<input type="checkbox"/> \$60,001 - \$80,000
<input type="checkbox"/> \$20,001 - \$40,000	<input type="checkbox"/> \$80,001 - \$100,000
<input type="checkbox"/> \$40,001 - \$60,000	<input type="checkbox"/> More than \$100,000

Tables

Table 1*Demographic Information, N=210*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Age (18-83)	38.48	12.746
	<i>N</i>	<i>%*</i>
Sex		
Male	81	38.5
Female	126	60.0
Another (Missing)	1 2	0.5 1.0
Education		
Some high school	1	0.5
High school graduate	26	12.4
GED	5	2.4
Associate's degree	19	9.0
Some college	44	21.0
Bachelor's degree	87	41.4
Advanced degree	28	13.3
Annual Household Income		
Less than \$20,000	32	15.2
\$20,001-40,000	48	22.9
\$40,001-60,000	46	21.9
\$60,001-80,000	31	14.8
\$80,001-100,000	20	9.5
More than \$100,000	33	15.7
Socioeconomic Status (SES)		
1 (lowest)	6	2.9
2	19	9.0
3	24	11.4
4	33	15.7
5	33	15.7
6	36	17.1
7	31	14.8
8	17	8.1
9	8	3.8
10 (highest)	3	1.4

Importance of Religion		
Not at all important	85	40.5
Moderately unimportant	24	11.4
Somewhat unimportant	10	4.8
Somewhat important	25	11.9
Moderately important	29	13.8
Very much important	35	16.7
Importance of Spirituality		
Not at all important	52	24.8
Moderately unimportant	25	11.9
Somewhat unimportant	7	3.3
Somewhat important	45	21.4
Moderately important	25	11.9
Very much important	56	26.7

*Percentages may not sum to 100%, as they are rounded to the nearest tenth.

Table 2*Demographic Variables by Condition*

Variable	<i>n</i>	Condition					
		Experimental (MS)			Control (non-MS)		
		Male	Female	Other	Male	Female	Other
Sex	208	38	67	0	43	59	1
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Age	210	38.114	12.411		38.848	13.004	
Education	210	5.095	1.559		5.210	1.472	
Income	210	3.438	1.667		3.114	1.605	
SES	210	5.190	2.084		5.133	2.071	

Table 3*Principal Components Analysis – Total Variance Explained*

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.249	56.236	56.236	2.249	56.236	56.236
2	.726	18.144	74.380			
3	.605	15.116	89.496			
4	.420	10.504	100.000			

Table 4*Testing Normality of Independent Variables*

	Skewness*	Kurtosis*
BJW	-.393	-.332
SDO	.612	-.540
Awareness	-.331	-.635
Perspective-Taking	.271	-.099
Empathic Action	-.384	-.354

*Values between -2 and +2 are considered acceptable

Table 5*Measure Statistics*

Measure	Range¹	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	α^2
<i>GB-JWS</i>	6-36	22.162	6.335	.877
<i>SDOS</i>	16-112	38.00	19.408	.954
<i>EMC/RSEE – Awareness</i>	1-6	4.053	1.321	.937
<i>EMC/RSEE – Perspective-Taking</i>	1-6	3.724	0.914	.679
<i>EMC/RSEE – Empathic Action</i>	1-6	4.231	1.069	.879
<i>Recognition of Microaggressions*</i>	1-6	3.988	1.173	.737
<i>Recognition of Microaggressions**</i>	-2.61-1.68	1	1.000	-

¹ Possible range for scale (not necessarily observed range in study)

² Cronbach's α estimate of internal consistency

**Mean of racial motivation scores for microaggression vignettes*

***Extracted factor (utilized in analyses)*

Table 6*Correlations among Demographic and Study Variables*

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Microaggression Recognition												
2. Belief in a Just World (BJW)	-.252**											
3. Social Dominance Orientation (SDO)	-.397**	.240**										
4. Awareness of Contemporary Racism and Privilege (Awareness)	.639**	-.429**	-.604**									
5. Empathic Perspective-Taking (Perspective-Taking)	.197**	-.153*	-.305**	.300**								
6. Empathic Feeling and Acting as an Ally (Empathic Action)	.495**	-.127	-.653**	.649**	.435**							
7. Age	-.205**	-.025	-.082	-.073	-.011	.035						
8. Sex	.201**	-.028	-.197**	.131	.091	.327**	-.082					
9. Education	.062	-.062	.018	.121	.039	.091	-.070	.095				
10. Religion	-.267**	.212**	.155*	-.360**	-.004	-.072	.107	.179*	-.075			
11. Spirituality	-.186**	.132	.030	-.208**	.127	.104	.250**	.157*	-.075	.765**		
12. Income	-.039	.141*	.054	-.030	-.078	.055	-.029	-.070	.332**	-.006	.022	
13. Socioeconomic Status	-.069	.139*	.060	.026	-.070	.081	-.061	.025	.384**	.050	.087	.614**

* p < .05. ** p < .01.

Table 7

Collinearity Statistics: Examining Multicollinearity among Independent Variables in Multiple Regression Model

Variable	Tolerance*	VIF**
Belief in a Just World (BJW)	.762	1.312
Social Dominance Orientation (SDO)	.514	1.946
Awareness of Contemporary Racism and Privilege (Awareness)	.428	2.339
Empathic Perspective-Taking (Perspective-Taking)	.801	1.249
Empathic Feeling and Acting as an Ally (Empathic Action)	.403	2.480

*Tolerance values less than 0.1 may indicate multicollinearity

**Variance Inflation Factors (VIFs) that exceed 10 may indicate multicollinearity

Table 8*Hierarchical Multiple Regressions – Hypotheses 2a, 3a, 4a, 5a, and 6a*

Hypothesis		Step 1		Step 2	
		ΔR^2	β	ΔR^2	β
2a	Age	.078**	-.015*	.058**	-.016*
	Sex		.372*		.358*
	BJW				-.038**
3a	Age	.078**	-.015*	.143**	-.018**
	Sex		.372*		.213
	SDO				-.020**
4a	Age	.078**	-.015*	.367**	-.012**
	Sex		.372*		.219*
	Awareness				.464**
5a	Age	.078**	-.015*	.036**	-.015**
	Sex		.372*		.338*
	Perspective-Taking				.209**
6a	Age	.078**	-.015*	.221**	-.017**
	Sex		.372*		.040
	Empathic Action				.465**

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .001$
 (Betas are unstandardized)

Table 9*Post-Hoc Analyses: Hierarchical Regression*

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5		Model 6	
	ΔR^2	β	ΔR^2	β	ΔR^2	β	ΔR^2	β	ΔR^2	β	ΔR^2	β
Age	.078**	-.015*	.058**	-.016*	.111**	-.018**	.199**	-.012*	.023	-.012*	.010	-.013*
Sex		.372*		.358*		.219		.213*		.212		.147
BJW				-.038**		-.026*		.003		.003		-.001
SDO						-.018**		-.001		-.001		.002
Awareness								.461**		.460**		.403**
Perspective-Taking										.009		-.029
Empathic Action												.154

*p < .05. **p < .001