

SPU Works

---

2020

## Acceptability of racial microaggressions among Asian American college students: Internalized model minority myth, individualism, and social conscience as correlates

Josephine Law  
*Seattle Pacific University*

Paul Youngbin Kim  
*Seattle Pacific University*

Jamie Lee  
*Seattle Pacific University*

Katharine Elizabeth Bau  
*Seattle Pacific University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.spu.edu/works>

 Part of the [Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Law, J. P., Kim, P. Y., Lee, J. H., & Bau, K. E. (2019). Acceptability of racial microaggressions among Asian American college students: Internalized model minority myth, individualism, and social conscience as correlates. *Mental Health, Religion, & Culture*, 22(9), 943-955. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13674676.2019.1699040>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ SPU. It has been accepted for inclusion in SPU Works by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ SPU.

Running head: ASIAN AMERICAN ACCEPTABILITY OF MICROAGGRESSIONS

Acceptability of Racial Microaggressions Among Asian American College Students:  
Internalized Model Minority Myth, Individualism, and Social Conscience as Correlates

Josephine P. Law, Paul Youngbin Kim, Jamie H. Lee, & Katharine E. Bau

Seattle Pacific University

Author Note.

Josephine P. Law, Paul Youngbin Kim, Jamie H. Lee, & Katharine E. Bau,  
Department of Psychology, School of Psychology, Family, and Community. We would like to  
thank Serena Severance for her assistance with participant recruitment. Correspondence  
concerning this article should be addressed to Paul Youngbin Kim, Department of Psychology,  
Seattle Pacific University, 3307 Third Avenue West, Suite 107, Seattle, WA 98119-1922. Email:  
paulkim@spu.edu

This is an accepted manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis in *Mental Health,  
Religion, and Culture* on January 9, 2020, available online:

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13674676.2019.1699040>

## ASIAN AMERICAN ACCEPTABILITY OF MICROAGGRESSIONS

## Abstract

The degree to which someone finds a racial microaggression to be acceptable can vary. We focus on the acceptability of racial microaggressions among Asian American college students, in relation to cultural and religious variables. We predicted that internalized model minority stereotype and individualism will be associated with being more accepting of microaggressions. We predicted that social conscience, or the belief that the church should be active in social justice, will be associated with being less accepting of microaggressions. Results based on 102 Asian American college students indicated that vertical individualism predicts greater acceptance of microaggressions, and results based on 77 Christian individuals out of the 102 participants indicated that social conscience predicts less acceptance of racial microaggressions. Excessive individualism may lead one to ignore the impact of contemporary racism and have a greater tolerance for microaggressions, whereas social conscience may support participation in social justice efforts, which may lead to a greater awareness of microaggressions.

*Keywords:* acceptability of racial microaggressions, Asian Americans, religiosity, individualism

## ASIAN AMERICAN ACCEPTABILITY OF MICROAGGRESSIONS

Acceptability of Racial Microaggressions Among Asian American College Students:  
Internalized Model Minority Myth, Individualism, and Social Conscience as Correlates

We may wish for a world in which people say only kind things about each other, but until we get there, we should not take umbrage at every negative note or adjective that is employed (Etzioni, 2014, para. 5).

Racial microaggressions are “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color” (Sue et al., 2007a, p. 271), and many empirical studies have linked the experience of them to unfavorable mental health outcomes (e.g., Kim, 2017; Nadal et al., 2014; Okazaki, 2009; Wang, Leu, & Shoda, 2011). Despite the evidence attesting to their influence on mental health and well-being, some scholars have questioned multicultural psychology’s recent focus on microaggressions (e.g., Lilienfield, 2017; Lukianoff & Haidt, 2015; Thomas, 2008). For example, in a review of microaggression research programs, Lilienfield (2017) points out the difficulty in isolating and operationalizing microaggressions as a subject of study, suggesting that microaggressions may be too subjective to research. These scholarly voices mirror the skeptical sentiments expressed about microaggressions in mainstream outlets such as the *Atlantic* article quoted above. Given the disagreements in both the scholarly and public spheres, it follows that individuals will differ on the degree to which they would consider an act of racial microaggression to be acceptable. The present study’s goal is to provide some insight on how cultural and religious variables might predict the acceptability of racial microaggressions among Asian American college students.

### **Asian Americans and Microaggressions**

Though racial microaggressions may be committed against any racial or ethnic minority individuals, our study focuses on the perception of an Asian American sample regarding

## ASIAN AMERICAN ACCEPTABILITY OF MICROAGGRESSIONS

microaggressions, given the prevalence of microaggressions in the Asian American experience and a lack of discussion regarding the impact of covert racism on Asian Americans (Liang, Li, & Kim, 2004; Sue et al., 2007b). Sue et al. (2007b) identified microaggression themes that are especially salient in the Asian American context, such as “Alien in Own Land,” and “Second Class Citizenship.” Furthermore, empirical research reveals the association between the experience of microaggressions among Asian Americans with deleterious outcomes (e.g., Kim, Kendall, & Cheon, 2017; Ong et al., 2013). For example, Ong et al. (2013) found that the experience of microaggressions experienced by Asian Americans resulted in unfavorable affect and somatic symptoms. Despite the negative impact of these microaggressions on Asian Americans, contrasting perspectives of Asian Americans as immune to racism and racist acts obscure the real experience of those on the receiving end of these microaggressions (Liang, Li, & Kim, 2014). Furthermore, Asian Americans may even adopt this perspective as a coping mechanism for real experiences of racism by ignoring or even accepting microaggressions (Lee, 2016). By bringing greater visibility to Asian Americans and focusing on how an Asian American sample views the acceptability of microaggressions, this study strives to contribute to a greater understanding of the overall Asian American experience with racism.

### **Acceptability of Racial Microaggressions**

We examined the degree to which Asian American college students believe that racial microaggressions committed by Whites against people of color are acceptable, or *acceptability of racial microaggressions*. Mekawi and Todd (2018) provided empirical evidence for four factors capturing different types of microaggressions that could be perceived by the individual as acceptable: victim blaming, color evasion, power evasion, and exoticizing. Victim blaming includes statements that place responsibility on ethnic minorities for their life situations. Color

## ASIAN AMERICAN ACCEPTABILITY OF MICROAGGRESSIONS

evasion strongly reflects a colorblind ideology, including statements that disregard race and ethnicity as important. Similarly, power evasion describes a perspective that deems race as unimportant, particularly in institutional contexts such as education, media, and the criminal justice system. Finally, exoticizing involves the practice of physically and sexually objectifying members of certain ethnic groups, playing into stereotypes about sexuality and expression of sexuality. In our study, we focused on two of the subscales (color evasion and power evasion) because we theorized them to be especially important in the Asian American context.

Specifically, we examined three predictors that are particularly relevant in the Asian American setting: internalized model minority stereotype, individualism, and religiosity.

### **Acceptability of Microaggressions and Internalized Model Minority Stereotype**

The model minority stereotype, otherwise known as the model minority myth, refers to the stereotyping of Asian Americans as successful, hard-working, and not experiencing barriers to their success (Museus & Kiang, 2009). Although the stereotype is often understood as one that depicts the success and ability of Asian Americans, the other side to this stereotype assumes there are fewer barriers to Asian American advancement, particularly in the professional field (i.e., unrestricted mobility; see Yoo, Burrola, & Steger, 2010). That is, Asian Americans who have internalized this belief about unrestricted mobility may believe that their Asian American community experiences less barriers—such as racial discrimination—to success compared to other racial and ethnic groups (Yoo et al., 2010). The internalization of the model minority stereotype may also reflect a colorblind ideology, which considers race and ethnicity as unimportant in everyday life and interactions, disregarding the impact of these factors in the sociopolitical context (Apfelbaum, Norton, & Summers, 2012). As Asian Americans internalize this belief and ideology, they may not perceive race or ethnicity, particularly their own, to be an

## ASIAN AMERICAN ACCEPTABILITY OF MICROAGGRESSIONS

obstacle in advancing through society (Gupta, Szymanski, & Leong, 2011). Additionally, colorblindness may act as a means of coping for Asian Americans, allowing them to reconcile their perceived status as a “model minority” with the experience of racial discrimination, whether towards themselves or other ethnic minorities (Lee, 2016). So, it seems reasonable that those who have internalized this belief might also be more accepting of microaggressive statements that convey a color-blind message. Similarly, those who espouse this belief might be likely to deny the reality of structural barriers, and thus resulting in more accepting of power evasion statements. Thus, we predicted that the endorsement of the model minority stereotype will predict being more accepting of racial microaggressions (Hypothesis 1).

### **Acceptability of Microaggressions and Individualism**

In addition to the model minority stereotype, we were also interested in how the cultural variable of individualism can influence how one views racism and its related constructs.

Individualism has been defined as a cultural framework that considers the individual as the “basic unit of analyses,” society existing to serve each individual’s needs and goals (Oyserman & Lee, 2008, p. 311). Research suggests that an individualistic cultural framework can be a hindrance in understanding racial dynamics because this perspective deems each individual as having the same opportunities and abilities, based on their effort and work (DiAngelo, 2010). This framework may also disregard structural or social forces at play, ignoring systemic racism and carrying the perception that racism happens solely on an interpersonal level (Croteau, 1999; DiAngelo 2010). In contrast, research also indicates that those who have less of an individualistic attribution to racial dynamics tend to have more favorable attitudes toward policies promoting racial equity, such as affirmative action (Hughes & Tuch, 2000). As modern racism tends to be based on egalitarian values that are characteristic of individualism, this may have implications

## ASIAN AMERICAN ACCEPTABILITY OF MICROAGGRESSIONS

for how one understands constructs of racism on a structural as well as personal level.

Particularly, microaggressions that pertain to an understanding of structural dynamics, such as those falling under Mekawi and Todd's (2018) factor of power evasion, may be perceived as less offensive and more acceptable. Similarly, one might perceive microaggressions falling under Mekawi and Todd's (2018) factor of color evasion as more acceptable, as these microaggressions relate to an understanding of the importance of race and ethnicity as factors affecting daily life and social relations. Extending this to our study, we predicted that individualism will be related to more acceptability of microaggressions (Hypothesis 2).

### **Acceptability of Microaggressions and Social Conscience**

Many Asian Americans identify with a religion, with the largest group of individuals identifying as Christian (42%; Pew Research Center, 2012). Religiosity can interface with issues related to racism in a complex manner (e.g., Duriez & Hutsebaut, 2000). Although racial discrimination is something that many religions speak against (Duck & Hunsberger, 1999), there may also be a discrepancy between what religions endorse and what is actually practiced (Hall, Matz, & Wood, 2010; Hearn, 2009). For example, Hearn (2009) described color-blind racism in which the church espouses the invalidation of the individual's ethnic or racial difference in the name of religion. Thus, there are ways in which religion can be hurtful for the person of color, in the face of racism or related issues.

There are also ways in which religion can be helpful for the individual who experiences racism. Although not much empirical work has been done on this topic in the Asian American context, literature from different communities of color indicate that religious variables (e.g., church-based social support) can protect against the detrimental impact of racism on mental health (e.g., Ellison, Musick, & Henderson, 2008; Graham & Roemer, 2012; Odom & Vernon-

## ASIAN AMERICAN ACCEPTABILITY OF MICROAGGRESSIONS

Feagans, 2010). The topic of racial microaggressions against the backdrop of religion is an understudied area but given the salience of religion in many Asian American lives, it seems reasonable that various aspects of religion may have an integral role in how one perceives race and related variables.

In addition to religious support, we thought that another religiosity variable worth exploring might be to examine how individual's belief regarding the role of the church in engaging race-related issues, or *social conscience* (Hilty & Morgan, 1985; Hilty, Morgan, & Burns, 1984). Although social activism is an integral part of many ethnic minority churches (Morris & Robinson, 1996), churches also vary in terms of their engagement with social issues. The degree to which one believes their congregation should be actively engaged in social issues may reflect one's understanding of such issues (Torres-Harding, Carollo, Schamberger, & Clifton-Soderstrom, 2013). Although not specific to race-related issues, religion in the Asian American context has been linked to other social attitudes, such as social attitudes toward abortion, homosexuality, and others (Pew Research Center, 2012). Thus, it makes sense that the church is influential in shaping one's perspectives regarding relevant social issues, such as contemporary forms of racism. Thus, we examined the perception of how socially conscious their church was (i.e., *social conscience*) as a predictor of acceptability of racial microaggressions. That is, we theorized that a socially conscious church would translate into a more social awareness of not tolerating racial microaggressions. We reasoned that greater the perception of the social conscience of the church, the less the individual would be accepting of racial microaggressions (Hypothesis 3).

### **Study Hypotheses**

## ASIAN AMERICAN ACCEPTABILITY OF MICROAGGRESSIONS

Hypothesis 1: Internalized model minority stereotype will be associated with being more accepting of racial microaggressions.

Hypothesis 2: Individualism will be associated with being more accepting of racial microaggressions.

Hypothesis 3: Religious emphasis on social justice will predict less acceptability of racial microaggressions.

### Method

#### Participants

Participants were undergraduate students from a private liberal arts institution (Site 1;  $n = 85$ ) and a public institution (Site 2;  $n = 17$ ), both located in the Pacific Northwest region of the United States. Participants were recruited through a written invitation that contained two hyperlinks (one link for mobile device, the other for a computer keyboard) to an online survey consisting of an informed consent form, a demographic questionnaire, and the study measures. At Site 1 the invitation was distributed through the Registrar's Office to self-identified Asian American participants and through social media. At Site 2, participants received the written invitation through an instructor who teaches courses with a large number of Asian American students. Participants were treated according to the ethical standards of the American Psychological Association. As compensation for participating in the survey, participants were entered into a drawing for a \$25 gift card to an online store (four drawings).

Participants were 102 self-identified Asian American undergraduate students ( $M_{\text{age}} = 20.45$ ,  $SD = 3.42$ ; 73 women, 28 men, and 1 non-binary). School years represented were first year ( $n = 30$ ), second ( $n = 18$ ), third ( $n = 29$ ), fourth ( $n = 24$ ), and "other" ( $n = 1$ ). Participants had the option of choosing more than one Asian ethnicity, and ethnicities represented were

## ASIAN AMERICAN ACCEPTABILITY OF MICROAGGRESSIONS

Chinese ( $n = 37$ ), Filipino ( $n = 27$ ), Japanese ( $n = 19$ ), Korean ( $n = 11$ ), Taiwanese ( $n = 8$ ), Vietnamese ( $n = 10$ ), Cambodian ( $n = 3$ ), and Indian ( $n = 1$ ). Seven participants chose the “other” option and wrote in their responses (e.g., Nepali). Seventy-eight participants reported the United States as their place of birth and having lived the majority of their lives in the United States ( $M = 18.32$ ,  $SD = 5.83$ ). Religions identified were Christian (Protestant;  $n = 57$ ), Christian (Catholic;  $n = 18$ ), Buddhist ( $n = 4$ ), Hindu ( $n = 1$ ), Islam ( $n = 1$ ), none ( $n = 17$ ), and other ( $n = 4$ ).

### Procedure and Data Cleaning

A total of 131 individuals at least began the online survey. We first deleted three cases because they did not give consent. Next, we deleted seven more cases because the participants failed to identify as Asian American. Ten more cases were deleted because the individuals did not attend one of the two institutions where data collection took place. Next, we deleted two cases in which the participants failed to identify as an undergraduate student at the time of study. Finally, we deleted seven cases that had at least 1 study measure completely missing. Resulting final  $N$  for the current study was 102.

### Measures

**Perception of racial microaggressions.** The Acceptability of Racial Microaggressions Scale (ARMS; Mekawi & Todd, 2018) was developed to assess how acceptable people of color perceived certain racial microaggressions to be. The ARMS includes 4 subscales (victim blaming, color evasion, power evasion, and exoticizing). In our study, we chose to use the subscales “Color Evasion” (8 items; “I don’t see your race, I see you as a person”) and “Power Evasion” (9 items; “Everyone in life goes through the same kinds of obstacles, regardless of their race”). The ARMS was created and validated using a racially diverse sample, but it was created

## ASIAN AMERICAN ACCEPTABILITY OF MICROAGGRESSIONS

to assess how persons of color might regard the acceptability of a White individual making such statements (Mekawi & Todd, 2018). Thus, participants respond to a prompt, “Imagine that you are talking with a racially diverse group of peers about various topics, including race and ethnicity. Rate how ACCEPTABLE you think it would be for a White group member to say the following to a racial/ethnic minority group member” (Mekawi & Todd, 2018, p. 16). Participants rate each item on a 6-point Likert scale (1 = *totally unacceptable*, 6 = *perfectly acceptable*). In our study, the ARMS had good internal consistency ( $\alpha = .92$  for color evasion;  $\alpha = .96$  for power evasion). The mean was used for analysis, with a higher score indicating greater acceptability of microaggressions.

**Internalization of the model minority stereotype.** The Internalization of the Model Minority Myth Measure (IM-4; Yoo et al., 2010) was developed to assess the degree to which the model minority stereotype may be internalized by an Asian American individual. The IM-4 includes two subscales (Achievement Orientation, Unrestricted Mobility), and we chose to utilize the Unrestricted Mobility subscale (5 items; “Asian Americans are less likely to encounter racial prejudice and discrimination”) only. The IM-4 was created and validated for use with Asian Americans (Yoo et al., 2010). Each item is rated on a 7-point Likert scale (1=*strongly disagree*; 7=*strongly agree*). In our study, the Achievement Orientation subscale of the IM-4 demonstrated good internal consistency,  $\alpha = .84$ . The mean was used for analysis, with a higher score indicating more internalization of the model minority stereotype.

**Individualism.** We used a measure of individualism and collectivism that further differentiates between horizontal and vertical dimensions (Singelis, Triandis, Bhawuk, & Gelfand, 1995; Triandis & Gelfand, 1998). The vertical dimension emphasizes hierarchy and competition, whereas the horizontal dimension emphasizes egalitarianism (Singelis et al., 1995;

## ASIAN AMERICAN ACCEPTABILITY OF MICROAGGRESSIONS

Triandis & Gelfand, 1998). The convergence of these constructs within individualism and collectivism result in 4 patterns of viewing oneself within a group—vertical individualism, horizontal individualism, vertical collectivism, and horizontal collectivism (Singelis et al., 1995; Triandis & Gelfand, 1998). For our study, we focused on the dimensions of vertical individualism (four items; “Competition is the law of nature”) and horizontal individualism (four items; “I’d rather depend on myself than others”; Triandis & Gelfand, 1998). Each item is rated on a nine-point Likert scale (1=*strongly disagree*; 7=*strongly agree*). Triandis and Gelfand (1998) found consistent correlations in the relationship between horizontal and vertical measurements of individualism and collectivism and the expected components of these patterns. The two scales demonstrated good reliability ( $\alpha = .70$  for horizontal individualism;  $\alpha = .84$  for vertical individualism). The mean scores were used for analyses, with higher scores indicating a more individualistic orientation.

**Social conscience.** The Religious Involvement Inventory (RII; Hilty & Morgan 1985; Hilty, Morgan, & Burns 1984) was developed to measure one’s involvement in religious activities or practices. The measure covers seven different dimensions of religiosity, including Personal Faith, Intolerance of Ambiguity, Orthodoxy, Social Conscience, Knowledge and Religious History, Life Purpose, and Church Involvement. Our study chose to use a modified version of the Social Conscience subscale, using five statements (e.g., “The church should take the lead in ending injustice toward people of color”) from the original 6 items. The Social Conscience category related the involvement of one’s church congregation to social issues, particularly race relations. Modifications were used to make the statements more inclusive and in line with current practices; for example, “blacks and other minority groups” was changed to “people of color.” Additionally, one statement was left out as we felt it did not relate as much to

## ASIAN AMERICAN ACCEPTABILITY OF MICROAGGRESSIONS

our study's interests. Each item is rated on a four-point Likert scale (1=*strongly disagree*; 4=*strongly agree*). The Social Conscience subscale demonstrated good internal consistency,  $\alpha = .85^1$ . The mean score was used for analysis, with a higher score indicating more belief that the church should be involved in social justice endeavors.

### Results

#### Preliminary Results

Results indicated that our participants endorsed color evasion at a moderate level ( $M = 3.03$ ,  $SD = 1.11$ ) and power evasion at a lower level ( $M = 1.99$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ ). Study variables that were significantly correlated with color evasion were power evasion ( $r = .54$ ,  $p < .001$ ), vertical individualism ( $r = .27$ ,  $p = .006$ ), and social conscience ( $r = -.21$ ,  $p = .035$ ). Likewise, study variables that were significantly correlated with power evasion were color evasion ( $r = .54$ ,  $p < .001$ ), vertical individualism ( $r = .21$ ,  $p = .042$ ), and social conscience ( $r = -.43$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

#### Internalized Model Minority Stereotype and Individualism as Predictors

We examined two multiple regression models with color evasion and power evasion as outcome variables. In Step 1, internalized model minority myth was entered, as it reflected an intrapersonal construct. In Step 2, horizontal and individualism were entered in addition to internalized model minority myth, as they reflected variables at the cultural level.

**Color evasion as outcome.** Table 2 displays the multiple regression results. In examining Step 2 where all three predictors (internalized model minority myth, horizontal individualism, and vertical individualism) were entered, results indicated that vertical individualism was statistically significant. Specifically, vertical individualism was a positive predictor of acceptability of racial microaggressions,  $B = .15$ ,  $t = 2.46$ ,  $p = .02$ . Horizontal individualism and

---

<sup>1</sup> This and subsequent analyses involving social conscience were calculated based on Christian (Catholic and Protestant) participants only ( $n = 77$ ).

## ASIAN AMERICAN ACCEPTABILITY OF MICROAGGRESSIONS

internalized model minority myth were non-significant predictors of acceptability of racial microaggressions. Step 2 explained a significant proportion of the variance in color evasion,  $R^2 = .09$ ,  $\Delta R^2 = .085$ ,  $F = 3.08$ ,  $p = .031$ .

**Power evasion as outcome.** Table 3 displays the multiple regression results. In examining Step 2 where all three predictors were entered (internalized model minority myth, horizontal individualism, and vertical individualism) were entered, results indicated that vertical individualism was statistically significant. Specifically, vertical individualism was a positive predictor,  $B = .14$ ,  $t = 2.45$ ,  $p = .016$ . Horizontal individualism and internalized model minority myth were non-significant predictors. Step 2 explained a significant proportion of the variance in power evasion,  $R^2 = .08$ ,  $\Delta R^2 = .071$ ,  $F = 2.71$ ,  $p = .049$ .

In sum, in both regression models, internalized model minority was a nonsignificant predictor, thus Hypothesis 1 was not supported. Vertical individualism was a significant predictor of both color evasion and power evasion, so Hypothesis 2 was supported.

### **Social Conscience as Predictor**

We also examined social conscience as a predictor of acceptability of racial microaggressions. Given that this variable examines social conscience in the context of a church setting, however, we decided to include only those who identified as Christian ( $n = 77$ ). Consistent with above analyses, internalized model minority myth (Step 1) and individualism (Step 2) were entered prior to the final step prior to social conscience (Step 3). Regression results indicated that for color evasion, social conscience was an inverse predictor ( $B = -.54$ ,  $t = -2.05$ ,  $p = .04$ ) even after controlling for internalized model minority, horizontal individualism, and vertical individualism. Step 3 explained a significant proportion of the variance in color evasion,  $R^2 = .15$ ,  $\Delta R^2 = .049$ ,  $F = 3.27$ ,  $p = .016$ . Likewise, for power evasion, social conscience was an

## ASIAN AMERICAN ACCEPTABILITY OF MICROAGGRESSIONS

inverse predictor ( $B = -.95$ ,  $t = -3.74$ ,  $p < .001$ ), even after controlling for internalized model minority, horizontal individualism, and vertical individualism. Step 3 explained a significant proportion of the variance in power evasion,  $R^2 = .24$ ,  $\Delta R^2 = .148$ ,  $F = 5.61$ ,  $p = .001$ .

### Discussion

The present study was a preliminary investigation of Asian American college students' tendency to accept or reject racial microaggressions committed by Whites, and how it correlates with cultural and religious variables. We found that vertical individualism was an important predictor of being more accepting of racial microaggressions. For those who identified as Christian, we also found that belief that the church should be active in social justice endeavors was predictive of being less accepting of racial microaggressions. Contrary to our hypothesis, internalization of the model minority stereotype did not significantly predict being more accepting of racial microaggressions.

Our significant findings are consistent with the existing literature that points to individualism as a potential barrier to understanding racism, especially structural racism (e.g., DiAngelo, 2010; Emerson & Smith, 2001). Likewise, our finding associated with social conscience of a church is fitting with the larger literature that highlights the important role of religion in influencing one's perspectives regarding social issues (e.g., Torres-Harding et al., 2013). In addition, our finding also reiterates the importance of religiosity in the context of race and race-related discourse (e.g., Ellison, Musick, & Henderson, 2008; Odom & Vernon-Feagans, 2010). To our knowledge, however, our study is the first to examine and highlight these variables' relation to acceptability of racial microaggressions for Asian American college students.

As vertical individualism establishes a sense that one's standing in relation to social

## ASIAN AMERICAN ACCEPTABILITY OF MICROAGGRESSIONS

structures is attained through individual acts, this view ignores that institutional racism may impact and prevent mobility. This may be manifested in the tolerance one has for microaggressions, especially those regarding social standing and ability. In contrast, social conscience emphasizes the participation of one's church in social issues, and as one encourages and supports this participation, they may develop a greater awareness of racial injustices, such as the harm of microaggressions. Thus, individualism and social conscience may represent two variables that are exacerbating and facilitative in terms of increasing the awareness about racial microaggressions among Asian American college students, respectively.

### **Implications for Research and Practice**

Our findings suggest that the examination of acceptability of racial microaggressions among Asian American individuals is a sensible research endeavor. Although this construct and the way to assess it (Mekawi & Todd, 2018) is relatively new, there seems to be much promise in unpacking the process by which one might lead to developing greater or less accepting views about racial microaggressions. Put differently, our study opens the door for more variables and mechanisms to be examined involving acceptability of racial microaggressions among Asian American college students.

The present study has implications for practice with Asian American college students, including for counseling and religious professionals. In counseling, this study could indicate the importance of culturally diverse and culturally competent counselors who are sensitive to the different worldviews that the students and clients that they work with are adhering to.

Specifically, the mental health professional should be aware that clients or students who endorse extreme individualism could, in turn, be espousing a view that ignores or at least downplays the harmful effects of racial microaggressions. In contrast to individualism, we found that a strong

## ASIAN AMERICAN ACCEPTABILITY OF MICROAGGRESSIONS

belief that religious institutions should be active in social justice can be helpful in being more sensitive to the deleterious effects of racial microaggressions. This points to the importance of religious communities and institutions in helping individuals develop more awareness of racial microaggressions and their impact. These findings are especially promising, given the large number of Asian Americans in the U.S. who identify as Christian (Pew Research Center, 2012).

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

Despite its contributions to multicultural and Asian American psychology, we also recognize that there are some limitations of our study. First, our study consisted of participants from a particular region in the United States (i.e., the Pacific Northwest), and therefore readers should take caution in generalizing our findings. Future studies should include other geographic regions for more representativeness. Second, our study examined direct effects but did not examine more complex models, like mediators and moderators. We wonder if there are culturally-relevant mediators or moderators that might be important to identify in future studies. For example, a participant's ethnic identity development might be an important consideration. Third, although our religiosity variable was an important one in the context of Asian American Christians, there are other religious variables that might also be good to examine in relation to acceptability of racial microaggressions. Future studies should continue to examine the ways in which religiosity can increase or decrease the acceptability of racial microaggressions. Finally, our study focused on a pan-Asian sample. As a next step, future studies might examine acceptability of racial microaggressions and its correlates in a specific Asian sample so that within group difference and similarities among Asian ethnicities may be highlighted.

## ASIAN AMERICAN ACCEPTABILITY OF MICROAGGRESSIONS

## References

- Apfelbaum, E. P., Norton, M. I., & Sommers, S. R. (2012). Racial color blindness: Emergence, practice, and implications. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 21*, 205-209. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721411434980>
- Croteau, J. M. (1999). One struggle through individualism: toward an antiracist White racial identity. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 77*, 30-32. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6676.1999.tb02411.x>
- DiAngelo, R. J. (2010). Why can't we all just be individuals?: Countering the discourse of individualism in anti-racist education. *InterActions: UCLA Journal of Education and Information Studies, 6*(1). Retrieved from <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/5fm4h8wm>
- Duck, R. J., & Hunsberger, B. (1999). Religious orientation and prejudice: The role of religious proscription, right-wing. *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion, 9*, 157-179. [https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327582ijpr0903\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327582ijpr0903_1)
- Duriez, B., & Hutsebaut, D. (2000). The relation between religion and racism: The role of post-critical beliefs. *Mental Health, Religion & Culture, 3*, 85-102. <http://doi.org/10.1080/13674670050002135>
- Ellison, C. G., Musick, M. A., & Henderson, A. K. (2008). Balm in Gilead: Racism, religious involvement, and psychological distress among African-American adults. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 47*, 291-309. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5906.2008.00408.x>
- Emerson, M. O., & Smith, C. (2001). *Divided by faith: Evangelical religion and the problem of race in America*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

## ASIAN AMERICAN ACCEPTABILITY OF MICROAGGRESSIONS

Etzioni, A. (2014). Don't sweat the microaggressions: The old pitfalls of new sensitivities in political speech. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from

<https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2014/04/dont-sweat-the-microaggressions/360278/>

Graham, J. R., & Roemer, L. (2012). A preliminary study of the moderating role of church-based social support in the relationship between racist experiences and general anxiety symptoms. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 18*, 268 – 276.

<http://doi.org/10.1037/a0028695>

Gupta, A., Szymanski, D. M., & Leong, F. T. (2011). The “model minority myth”: Internalized racialism of positive stereotypes as correlates of psychological distress, and attitudes toward help-seeking. *Asian American Journal of Psychology, 2*, 101-114.

<http://doi.org/10.1037/a0024183>

Hall, D. L., Matz, D. C., & Wood, W. (2010). Why don't we practice what we preach? A meta-analytic review of religious racism. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 14*, 126-139. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1088868309352179>

Hearn, M. (2009). Color-blind racism, color-blind theology, and church practices. *Religious Education, 104*, 272-288. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00344080902881298>

Hilty, D. M., & Morgan, R. (1985). Construct validation for the Religious Involvement Inventory: Replication. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 24*, 75-86.

<http://doi.org/10.2307/1386276>

Hilty, D. M., Morgan, R. L., & Burns, J. E. (1984). King and Hunt revisited: Dimensions of religious involvement. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 23*, 252-266.

<http://doi.org/10.2307/1386040>

## ASIAN AMERICAN ACCEPTABILITY OF MICROAGGRESSIONS

- Hughes, M., & Tuch, S. A. (2000). How beliefs about poverty influence racial policy attitudes: A study of Whites, African Americans, Hispanics, and Asians in the United States. In D. O. Sears, J. Sidanius, & L. Bobo (Eds.) *Racialized politics: The debate about racism in America*, (pp. 165-190). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Kim, P. Y., Kendall, D. L., & Cheon, H. S. (2017). Racial microaggressions, cultural mistrust, and mental health outcomes among Asian American college students. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 87, 663-670. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/ort0000203>
- Lee, J. (2016). Coping with racial/ethnic discrimination: The role of color-blind racial ideology among Asian Americans. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <https://conservancy.umn.edu/handle/11299/182802>
- Liang, C. T., Li, L. C., & Kim, B. S. (2004). The Asian American racism-related stress inventory: Development, factor analysis, reliability, and validity. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 51, 103-114. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-0167.51.1.103>
- Lilienfeld, S. O. (2017). Microaggressions: Strong claims, inadequate evidence. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 12, 138-169. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691616659391>
- Lukianoff, G., & Haidt, J. (2015). The coddling of the American mind. *The Atlantic*, 316(2), 42-52. Retrieved from <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/09/the-coddling-of-the-american-mind/399356/>
- Mekawi, Y., & Todd, N. R. (2018). Okay to say?: Initial validation of the Acceptability of Racial Microaggressions Scale. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 24, 346-362. <http://doi.org/10.1037/cdp0000201>
- Morris, J. R., & Robinson, D. T. (1996). Community and Christianity in the Black church. *Counseling and Values*, 41, 59-69.

## ASIAN AMERICAN ACCEPTABILITY OF MICROAGGRESSIONS

<https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2161-007X.1996.tb00863.x>

- Museus, S. D., & Kiang, P. N. (2009). Deconstructing the model minority myth and how it contributes to the invisible minority reality in higher education research. *New Directions for Institutional Research*, 142, 5-15. Retrieved from [https://scholarworks.umb.edu/asamst\\_facutly\\_pubs/2/](https://scholarworks.umb.edu/asamst_facutly_pubs/2/)
- Nadal, K. L., Wong, Y., Griffin, K. E., Davidoff, K., & Sriken, J. (2014). The adverse impact of racial microaggressions on college students' self-esteem. *Journal of College Student Development*, 55, 461-474. <http://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2014.0051>
- Odom, E. C., & Vernon-Feagans. (2010). Buffers of racial discrimination: Links with depression among rural African American mothers. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 72, 346-359. <http://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2010.00704.x>
- Okazaki, S. (2009). Impact of racism on ethnic minority mental health. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 4, 103-107. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-6924.2009.01099.x>
- Ong, A. D., Burrow, A. L., Fuller-Rowell, T. E., Ja, N. M., & Sue, D. W. (2013). Racial microaggressions and daily well-being among Asian Americans. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 60, 188-199. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0031736>
- Oyserman, D., & Lee, S. W. (2008). Does culture influence what and how we think? Effects of priming individualism and collectivism. *Psychological Bulletin*, 134, 311-342. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.134.2.311>
- Pew Research Center (2012). *Asian Americans: A Mosaic of Faiths*. Retrieved from <https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2012/07/Asian-Americans-religion-full-report.pdf>

## ASIAN AMERICAN ACCEPTABILITY OF MICROAGGRESSIONS

Singelis, T. M., Triandis, H. C., Bhawuk, D. P., & Gelfand, M. J. (1995). Horizontal and vertical dimensions of individualism and collectivism: A theoretical and measurement refinement. *Cross-Cultural Research, 29*, 240-275.

<http://doi.org/10.1177/106939719502900302>

Sue, D. W., Bucceri, J., Lin, A. I., Nadal, K. L., & Torino, G. C. (2007). Racial microaggressions and the Asian American experience. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 13*, 72-81. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/1099-9809.13.1.72>

Sue, D. W., Capodilupo, C. M., Torino, G. C., Bucceri, J. M., Holder, A., Nadal, K. L., & Esquilin, M. (2007). Racial microaggressions in everyday life: Implications for clinical practice. *American Psychologist, 62*, 271-286.

<http://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.62.4.271>

Thomas, K. R. (2008). Macrononsense in multiculturalism. *American Psychologist, 63*, 274–275. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.63.4.274>

Torres-Harding, S. R., Carollo, O., Schamberger, A., & Clifton-Soderstrom, K. (2013). Values and religiosity as predictors of engagement in social justice. *Journal of Prevention & Intervention in the Community, 41*, 255-266.

<http://doi.org/10.1080/10852352.2013.818489>

Triandis, H. C., & Gelfand, M. J. (1998). Converging measurement of horizontal and vertical individualism and collectivism. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 74*, 118-128. <http://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.74.1.118>

Wang, J., Leu, J., & Shoda, Y. (2011). When the seemingly innocuous “stings”: Racial microaggressions and their emotional consequences. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 37*, 1666-1678. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167211416130>

## ASIAN AMERICAN ACCEPTABILITY OF MICROAGGRESSIONS

Yoo, H. C., Burrola, K. S., & Steger, M. F. (2010). A preliminary report on a new measure:

Internalization of the Model Minority Myth Measure (IM-4) and its psychological correlates among Asian American college students. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 57, 114-127. <http://doi.org/10.1037/a0017871>

## ASIAN AMERICAN ACCEPTABILITY OF MICROAGGRESSIONS

**Table 1. Bivariate Correlations, Means, SDs, and Range for the Study Variables.**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Possible Range
1. Color Evasion	-						3.03	1.11	1-6
2. Power Evasion	.541***	-					1.99	1.05	1-6
3. Internalized Model Minority Myth	.032	.077	-				3.34	1.11	1-7
4. Horizontal Individualism	.167	-.123	-.070	-			7.00	1.24	1-9
5. Vertical Individualism	.271**	.202*	-.009	.240*	-		5.02	1.81	1-9
6. Social Conscience	-.240*	-.442***	-.041	.190	-.138	-	3.52	.46	1-4

*Notes.*

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

For social conscience only,  $N = 77$  to reflect participants who identified as Christian.

## ASIAN AMERICAN ACCEPTABILITY OF MICROAGGRESSIONS

**Table 2. Color Evasion Regressed on Internalized Model Minority Myth, Horizontal Individualism, and Vertical Individualism ( $N = 102$ ).**

Variable	<i>B</i>	S.E. <sub>B</sub>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	$\Delta R^2 (F_{sig})$
Step 1						.001 (.749)
Constant	2.92	.35		8.32	< .001	
Internalized MMM	.032	.10	.03	.32	.75	
Step 2						.085 (.031)
Constant	1.44	.73		1.97	.05	
Internalized MMM	.04	.10	.04	.43	.67	
Horizontal individualism	.10	.09	.11	1.11	.27	
Vertical individualism	.15	.06	.24	2.46	.02	

*Note.* MMM = model minority myth.

## ASIAN AMERICAN ACCEPTABILITY OF MICROAGGRESSIONS

**Table 3. Hierarchical Regression Analysis: Power Evasion Regressed on Internalized Model Minority Myth, Horizontal Individualism, and Vertical Individualism ( $N = 102$ ).**

Variable	<i>B</i>	S.E. <sub>B</sub>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	$\Delta R^2$ ( $F_{sig}$ )
Step 1						.006 (.443)
Constant	1.75	.33		5.28	< .001	
Internalized MMM	.07	.09	.08	.77	.443	
Step 2						.071 (.049)
Constant	2.12	.69		3.05	.003	
Internalized MMM	.06	.09	.07	.68	.496	
Horizontal individualism	-.15	.09	-.18	-1.77	.080	
Vertical individualism	.14	.06	.25	2.45	.016	

*Note.* MMM = model minority myth.

## ASIAN AMERICAN ACCEPTABILITY OF MICROAGGRESSIONS

**Table 4. Hierarchical Regression Analysis: Color Evasion Regressed on Internalized Model Minority Myth, Horizontal Individualism, Vertical Individualism, and Social Conscience (N = 77).**

Variable	<i>B</i>	S.E. <sub>B</sub>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	$\Delta R^2$ ( <i>F</i> <sub>sig</sub> )
Color Evasion						
Step 3						.049 (.016)
Constant	3.31	1.15		2.88	.005	
Internalized MMM	.06	.11	.06	.51	.612	
Horizontal individualism	.10	.10	.12	1.08	.285	
Vertical individualism	.16	.07	.26	2.36	.021	
Social conscience	-.54	.26	-.23	-2.05	.044	
Power Evasion						
Step 3						.148 (.001)
Constant	5.32	1.10		4.83	.000	
Internalized MMM	.06	.10	.06	.60	.55	
Horizontal individualism	-.10	.09	-.11	-1.02	.31	
Vertical individualism	.12	.07	.19	1.77	.08	
Social conscience	-.95	.25	-.40	-3.74	.000	

*Note.* MMM = model minority myth.