

White Individuals' Perception On Whiteness

Authors : Sebastian Del Corral Winder, Kiriana Sanchez, Mixalis Poulakis, Samantha Gray

Abstract : This paper seeks to explore White privilege and Whiteness. Being White in the U.S. is often perceived as the norm and it brings significant social, economic, educational, and health privileges that often are hidden in social interactions. One quality of Whiteness has been its invisibility given its intrinsic impact on the system, which becomes only visible when paying close attention to White identity and culture and during cross-cultural interactions. The cross-cultural interaction provides an emphasis on differences between the participants and people of color are often viewed as “the other.” These interactions may promote an increased opportunity for discrimination and negative stereotypes against a person of color. Given the recent increase of violence against culturally diverse groups, there has been an increased sense of otherness and division in the country. Furthermore, the accent prestige theory has found that individuals who speak English with a foreign accent are perceived as less educated, competent, friendly, and trustworthy by White individuals in the United States. Using the consensual qualitative research (CQR) methodology, this study explored the cross-cultural dyad from the White individual’s perspective focusing on the psychotherapeutic relationship. The participants were presented with an audio recording of a conversation between a psychotherapist with a Hispanic accent and a patient with an American English accent. Then, the participants completed an interview regarding their perceptions of race, culture, and cross-cultural interactions. The preliminary results suggested that the Hispanic accent alone was enough for the participants to assign stereotypical ethnic and cultural characteristics to the individual with the Hispanic accent. Given the quality of the responses, the authors completed a secondary analysis to explore Whiteness and White privilege in more depth. Participants were found to be on a continuum in their understanding and acknowledgment of systemic racism; while some participants listed examples of inequality, other participants noted: “all people are treated equally.” Most participants noted their feelings of discomfort in discussing topics of cultural diversity and systemic racism by fearing to “say the ‘wrong thing.’” Most participants placed the responsibility of discussing cultural differences with the person of color, which has been observed to create further alienation and otherness for culturally diverse individuals. The results indicate the importance of examining racial and cultural biases from White individuals to promote an anti-racist stance. The results emphasize the need for greater systemic changes in education, policies, and individual awareness regarding cultural identity. The results suggest the importance for White individuals to take ownership of their own cultural biases in order to promote equity and engage in cultural humility in a multicultural world. Future research should continue exploring the role of White ethnic identity and education as they appear to moderate White individuals’ attitudes and beliefs regarding other races and cultures.

Keywords : culture, qualitative research, whiteness, white privilege

Conference Title : ICCP 2022 : International Conference on Cultural Psychology

Conference Location : New York, United States

Conference Dates : August 08-09, 2022