

Language vs. Behaviors: A Holistic Approach to Studying Racism.

**Lacey Gillard**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Psychology, Purdue School of Science

Racism has always been an issue in the history of the United States. However, this country has evolved and transformed in ways that have greatly limited old time blatant racism. Consequently in today's age, racism has converted into an implicit and arguably more insidious form, as it is not as obvious to identify. Subtle and implicit racial bias has become all the more difficult to identify or discuss given the popular belief that we will live in a post-racial society. Researchers from different disciplines have taken different approaches to understand and confront these implicit racial biases. In particular, social psychologists are interested in answering questions about social behavior. They seek to objectively and systematically measure and assess implicit racism through the use of experiments and implicit measures. Conversely, rhetoricians are interested in how language and symbols create perceptions of reality and understandings of the world. They aim to understand how language not only shapes our beliefs about racial matters but also reveals our attitudes and ways of thinking. Rhetoricians study language and symbol use in areas such as political discourse, educational discourse, media texts, and sites like civil rights museums which participate in shaping collective memories. This research will highlight the different methods to address implicit racism used by researchers in social psychology and rhetoric. The contribution of this research is not only to consider the unique intellectual insights of each field but also to argue for the necessity of interdisciplinary approaches to studying racism. Social scientific and humanities research complement one another's aims. Therefore, together they provide a more complete understanding of and way to confront social problems such as implicit racism.

Mentor: Jonathan P. Rossing, Department of Communication Studies, IU School of Liberal Arts, IUPUI