Oral Defense Announcement
University of Missouri – St. Louis Graduate School

An oral examination in defense of the dissertation for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy in Education with an emphasis in Counseling

Zori A. Paul

M.A. in Clinical Mental Health Counseling, June, 2018, Northwestern University
B.A. in Comparative Human Development, May, 2015, The University of Chicago

Bisexual+ Women of Color and Microaffirmations

Date: April 21, 2022
Time: 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.
Place: Remote

Abstract
In the last decade, there has been an interest in exploring affirming identity factors for bisexual+ (bisexual, pansexual, queer, fluid, etc.) individuals that would promote positive mental wellbeing. However, there is a dearth in the current research that focuses on bisexual+ women of color and affirming factors unique to their intersecting racial/ethnic, sexual, and gender identities. By understanding what potential affirming factors, including bisexual microaffirmations, protect bisexual+ women of color from binegativity (bisexual specific discrimination), mental health professionals can provide and advocate for bisexual+ specific affirming care. This dissertation contains three studies: the first study explores how the experiences of binegativity and positive experiences of bisexuality predict social appearance anxiety (social anxiety around one’s appearance) for bisexual+ women of color; the second study explores how the experiences of binegativity and racial/ethnic experiences predict social appearance anxiety for bisexual+ women of color; and the third study explores the psychometric properties of the Bisexual Microaffirmation Scale: For Women (BMSFW) when used with a sample of bisexual+ women of color. Findings for the first study suggest that bisexual+ collective self-esteem is a protective factor for bisexual+ women of color when considering the relationship between bisexual microaggressions and social appearance anxiety. For the second study, findings suggest that racial/ethnic collective self-esteem is not a protective factor for bisexual+ women of color when considering the relationship between bisexual microaggressions and social appearance anxiety. Finally, findings from the third study suggested some convergent and discriminant validity of the BMSFW but also a different factor structure when used with this sample of bisexual+ women of color. Further findings, limitations, and implications for counselors, researchers, and other mental health professionals are also presented and discussed.

Keywords: bisexuality, women of color, microaffirmations, identity affirmation

Defense of Dissertation Committee
Susan Kashubeck-West, Chairperson, Ph.D.
Mary Edwin, Committee Faculty Member, Ph.D.
Emily Brown, Committee Faculty Member, Ph.D.
Matthew Taylor, Committee Faculty Member, Ph.D.