

Fall 2016 Women's Studies Colloquium
Friday, Oct 7; 12:30-2:00 pm, Saunders 637

Kristin Pauker: *Believing That Prejudice Can Change: Implications for Children's Interracial Anxiety*

Racial tensions have become a fixture in U.S. society. Interracial interactions are often anxiety-provoking, awkward, and threatening for both Whites and racial minorities alike. Yet we know surprisingly little about when and why tensions in interracial interaction emerge in childhood, and even less about how to mitigate such tensions. Bridging literatures in social and developmental psychology, I examine the onset of experienced tension in children's interracial interactions to develop a deeper understanding of its psychological origins, and in turn, the type of intervention that may be best-equipped to alleviate it and improve the quality of interracial interactions. In a series of studies with diverse samples of 8-12-year-olds, I explore when children start to exhibit anxiety surrounding the topic of race and whether children's conceptions of racial prejudice itself—in terms of whether it is a fixed or malleable characteristic—may be a critical factor shaping their willingness to engage in and the quality of their interracial interactions. This line of research provides insights into the types of interventions that could be developed to alleviate racial tensions and illustrates how productive partnerships can be formed with school districts to conduct research that can actually be applied back to the classroom.

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