

Introduction to the Special Issue on the Impact of Race on Psychological Processes

Julia Spielmann¹, Kathryn M. Kroeper², Alejandro Lleras¹, and Jean E. Fox Tree³

¹ Department of Psychology, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

² Department of Psychology, The Ohio State University

³ Department of Psychology, University of California, Santa Cruz

Race and shape individual beliefs and perceptions, interpersonal and intergroup interaction, and institutional processes. Psychological science can aid in critically examining how race shapes psychological processes across these levels—individual, interpersonal, and institutional. The current special issue ties together a variety of methodological approaches and presents innovative research findings about the impact of race and racism on psychological processes, shedding light on how individual, interpersonal, and institutional structures affect racial equity. Together, these articles call on the research community to critically examine our own positionality and privilege when conducting psychological research, and provide recommendations for including and, importantly, centering people from traditionally marginalized social backgrounds in our work. In the introduction for this special issue, we situate the included articles in the broader context of psychological literature, and provide a reflective summary of the articles.

Keywords: racism, racial equity, intersectionality, social support, institutional racism

Growing recognition of police profiling and violence that disproportionately target communities

Editor's Note. This is an introduction to the special issue "Impact of Race on Psychological Processes." Please see the Table of Contents here: <http://psycnet.apa.org/PsycARTICLES/journal/tps/7/4/>—DJW

Julia Spielmann  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5502-454X>

Kathryn M. Kroeper  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2701-5053>

Alejandro Lleras  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0391-1355>

Jean E. Fox Tree  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5407-5935>

Julia Spielmann and Kathryn M. Kroeper share first authorship as their contributions and leadership of this article were shared.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Julia Spielmann, Department of Psychology, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, 603 East Daniel Street, Champaign, IL 61820, United States, or Kathryn M. Kroeper, Department of Psychology, The Ohio State University, 1835 Neil Avenue, Columbus, OH 43210, United States. Email: julias3@illinois.edu or kroeper.1@osu.edu

of color, hand in hand with exposés documenting pervasive and persistent racial gaps in wealth, health, and educational opportunity (e.g., Castillo-Lavergne & Destin, 2019; Keister & Moller, 2000; Okonofua et al., 2016; Williams, 2012), have cast an international spotlight on the antiracism movements that challenge deeply rooted racial disparities. As the science investigating people's beliefs, motivation, and behavior, psychological science is in many ways poised to contribute to these antiracism efforts. Indeed, factions within psychological science have long highlighted how race and racism shape individual beliefs and perceptions, interpersonal and intergroup interaction, and institutional processes (Richeson & Sommer, 2016) and, in some cases, have offered psychology-based solutions to such problems (e.g., Czopp et al., 2006; Okonofua et al., 2016; Walton & Cohen, 2011). Still, psychological science as a whole often struggles to adequately examine and address issues of race and racism (Richeson, 2018). A variety of antecedent factors help explain why psychology often struggles to appreciate the role of race and racism. For example, due to (1) systemic barriers limiting social mobility in and around academia and (2) incentive structures that encourage an

overreliance on so-called “convenience samples,” there is a dearth of scholars of color and participants of color, respectively, in many areas of psychological research (Bennett et al., 2020; Modica & Mamiseishvili, 2010; Roberts et al., 2020; U.S. Department of Education, 2019). Furthermore, the prominence of gatekeeping practices that prevent the publication of research centering people of color further contributes to a lack of knowledge about how race impacts psychological processes (Roberts et al., 2020). The purpose of this special issue, therefore, is to provide space for psychologists studying race and racism to share their empirical work, as well as their reflections and insights. In doing so, we hope to nudge psychological research toward a more critical and comprehensive understanding of how race and racism affect psychological processes.

The Current Issue

This special issue of *Translational Issues in Psychological Science* on Perspectives on the Impact of Race on Psychological Processes contains nine articles organized across four broad themes: (1) the role of intersectionality in research studies, (2) how race influences person perception and perception of institutional structures, (3) the support structures that can increase racial equity, and (4) the impact of race and racism in academic settings. Collectively, these articles present new and innovative research findings about the impact of race and racism on psychological processes, shed light on how individual, interpersonal, and institutional structures affect racial equity, and call the research community to action to critically examine our own positionality and privilege when conducting research. Furthermore, many of the contributing scholars provide recommendations for including and, importantly, centering the perspectives and experiences of people from traditionally marginalized backgrounds within psychology.

The Role of Intersectionality in Research Studies

In the opening article, Bharat et al. (2021) consider the role psychological research can take in advancing social justice and overcoming challenges faced by people of color with oppressed

intersecting identities. Specifically, the authors highlight the importance of considering intersectionality when conducting psychological research. Using a critical race theory framework, the researchers explore methodological, ethical, and funding challenges and considerations. For instance, the authors showcase how intersectionality influences research design and study implementation. Importantly, the authors highlight the detrimental impact that failure to consider intersectionality can have on oppressed communities. The researchers call for us to continuously consider our own positionality and intersecting identities when conducting research.

The Influence of Race in Perception of People of Color and Institutional Structures

In this section, two papers focus on how people of color are perceived by others and whether perceptions of institutional structures differ between White and Black Americans.

Chirco and Buchanan (2021) highlight the role that skin tone plays in peoples’ social categorization decisions. In an experiment, they demonstrate that brown skin tones (vs. White or Black skin tones) decrease perceptions of U.S. citizenship, with downstream implications for stringent immigration policy support. Given that population demographics are expected to shift over the next half century in the United States, with White skin tones becoming less prevalent (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017), implications of this work warn that increases in hostile immigration rhetoric and policy may be on the horizon.

Next, Taylor and Wilcox (2021) examine perceptions of patriotism and police. The authors are among the first to examine the association of patriotism and perceptions of police and whether this relation differs between Black and White Americans. Public debates surrounding police reform in response to instances of police violence against (usually Black or otherwise marginalized) U.S. citizens often involve discussions of patriotism (Wise, 2020). As such, this timely research explores the relation between patriotic attitudes and evaluations of police. The data revealed that for both Black and White participants, patriotic attitudes were positively related to perceptions of police. Interestingly, this relationship was moderated by participant race, such

that it was stronger among White participants than Black participants. The authors conclude by discussing their study's implications for future research and advocacy.

Supportive Structures Related to Racial Equity

In this section, three articles focus on examining how supportive structures can promote racial equity and contribute to the psychological health of people of color.

Schick et al. (2021) examine self-compassion as a protective factor to prevent alcohol use among Native American Indigenous (NAI) youth. Considering that NAI youth report experiencing high rates of racial discrimination (Lee et al., 2019) and such discrimination poses a risk factor for alcohol consumption (e.g., Armenta et al., 2016), it is important to understand the psychological factors that may protect NAI youth against this risk. Their investigation revealed that NAI youth who experienced racial discrimination reported high rates of alcohol consumption and alcohol-related problems, but that these rates were substantially undercut when NAI youth also reported high (vs. low) levels of self-compassion. As such, practicing self-compassion appears linked to adaptive coping within NAI youth populations, and these empirical insights suggest avenues for future intervention.

Next, Szkody, Rogers, et al. (2021) investigated the impact of relationship quality (with parents and friends) on psychological health among emerging adults, whether this relation is in part explained by social support, and whether these relations differ across race. Social support is instrumental to the mental and physical health of adolescents (e.g., King & Merchant, 2008), and particularly for people with oppressed identities (Compton et al., 2005; Tabaac et al., 2016). The researchers found that greater relationship quality (i.e., companionship, approval, satisfaction) with parents was associated with higher levels of overall perceived social support. Furthermore, this relation was moderated by race. Positive relationship quality with mothers had a stronger effect on the psychological health of Black (versus White) emerging adults.

Lastly, Szkody, Steele, et al. (2021) report the results of a study that examined perceived and received social support differences among emerging adult college students, by race and gender. Using an intersectional lens, they concluded that Black women at predominantly White institutions may benefit most from targeted interventions supplementing their received social support structures. However, they call for more research investigating perceived and received social support that uses an intersectional framework.

The Impact of Race in Academic Settings

In this section, three articles focus on the role of race in academic success.

Willis et al. (2021) investigated how race and gender affect peoples' experiences in academia. Specifically, the authors examined race and gender disparities in career advancement, with a focus on publishing and scientific review processes. They found that women and/or racially minoritized PhD holders and graduate students reported fewer publications and reported being less likely to be included in the review process. Overall, their results demonstrate that the leaky pipeline in research-focused psychology departments within U.S. colleges and universities persists. In response, the authors discuss various intervention possibilities across different stages of academic career development (e.g., promotion stage) to mitigate these racial and gender disparities.

Next, Thorne et al. (2021) investigate the role race plays in cross-racial mentoring relationships. In a qualitative study, Thorne et al. (2021) examined the perceptions that faculty of color hold about cross-race mentoring experiences. Mentoring plays an important role in successful career development, especially for faculty of color as they remain underrepresented in academia (U.S. Department of Education, 2019) and face discriminatory treatment and exclusion (Settles et al., 2020). Mentoring critically shapes career outcomes, such as productivity, job satisfaction, and career development (Johnson et al., 2018). Given the underrepresentation of people of color in faculty positions, a pressing question concerns the development of successful cross-racial mentoring relationships. Qualitative interviews with tenure-track faculty of color revealed three broad themes

(i.e., factors that shape how race affects mentoring relationships, racial difference as conferring benefits to mentoring relationships, and racial difference as irrelevant to mentoring relationships), supported by extensive, qualitatively-rich interview transcripts. Based on their findings, the authors offer valuable institutional recommendations for enhancing the utility of faculty mentoring within cross-racial relationships.

In the final article of this special issue, Fuller et al. (2021) synthesize research on systemic barriers contributing to racial disparities within science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields. In particular, their review highlights the important role of early childhood education structures in either supporting or hindering the STEM trajectories of young Black and Brown children. Notably, their paper concludes with a call to action for communities, early childhood education programs, families, and the broader U.S. society. These include (a) equitable access to high-quality early childhood STEM education, (b) ongoing training for early childhood STEM educators in culturally relevant pedagogy, and (c) sufficient funding to support these initiatives.

Conclusion

Together, these rarticles move psychological research toward better understanding the impact of race on psychological processes. Understanding the role of race and racism promises to dismantle the many roadblocks to a more just and equitable society. Conducting the science necessary to understand the role of race in psychological processes requires highlighting the perspectives of people of color, which in turn requires overcoming challenges in recruiting and studying people of color, including funding such research and supporting the scholars who undertake it. One of the ways that we achieve these goals is by changing the face of who decides what is studied, how it is studied, and how to interpret findings. To this end, the field should more commonly involve community members to inform their research design and use community-based participatory approaches.

The topics covered in this special issue are a great start to a more equitable and diverse psychological science. Yet there are many other areas of

psychological research that could be further explored, such as (1) the impact of historical reckoning (as well as federal, state, and local policies) on health and well-being, (2) the impact of race information on perception, memory, and decision making, (3) identity development among people of color, and (4) experiences and perspectives at the intersection of racial and other social identities (e.g., gender, age, class, etc.). We hope that psychology as a field will continue to move toward a more equitable science, including using the findings presented in this special issue to develop empirically informed interventions and increasing the use of intersectional perspectives in research processes.

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