

HOW PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENCE IMPEDES INTERSECTIONAL THINKING¹

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Abstract

Psychological science that examines racial and gender bias, primarily located within social psychology, has tended to discount the ways in which race and gender mutually construct each other. Lay conceptions of racial and gender discrimination tend to see racism as primarily afflicting men and sexism primarily afflicting White women, when in fact race and gender are interrelated and work together intersectionally. Ignoring women's experiences of racial discrimination produces androcentric conceptions of racism—in other words, many definitions of racial discrimination are to some degree sexist (Goff et al., 2008). Similarly, privileging the experiences of White women produces narrow definitions of gender discrimination—in other words, many definitions of gender discrimination are to some degree racist, such that they serve to reinforce the current societal hierarchies. Psychological science sometimes appears to reflect such conceptions. The result is that the social science principally responsible for explaining individual-level biases has developed a body of research that can undervalue the experiences of non-White women (Goff et al., 2008). This article examines features of social psychological science and its research processes to answer a question suggested by this framing: is the current psychological understanding of racism, to some extent, sexist and the understanding of sexism, to some extent, racist? We argue here that the instruments that much of social psychological science uses to measure racial and gender discrimination may play a role in producing inaccurate understandings of racial and gender discrimination. We also present original experimental data to suggest that lay conceptions parallel social psychology's biases: with lay persons also assuming that racism is about Black men and sexism is about White women.² Finally, we provide some suggestions to increase the inclusivity of psychology's study of discrimination as well as reasons for optimism in this area.

Keywords: Intersectionality, Social Psychology, Methodology, Racism, Sexism

INTRODUCTION

Psychological science that examines racial and gender bias, primarily located within social psychology, has, to this point, insufficiently engaged the ways in which race

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and gender mutually construct each other to shape people's vulnerability to and experiences with race and gender discrimination. This omission has produced androcentric conceptions of racism, that is, conceptions of racism that focus on men (Goff et al., 2008) and Euro-centered conceptions of sexism, that is, conceptions of sexism that focus on White women. In other words, social psychology conceptualizes racism primarily from the perspective of how Black men are treated and conceptualizes sexism primarily from the perspective of how White women are treated. These approaches reflect a "single axis" (Crenshaw 1989) framework that marginalizes the experiences of women of color generally, and Black women in particular. This article demonstrates the precise ways in which this marginalization has occurred and offers suggestions to correct this bias.

To do so, we first articulate the *specific habits of methodology and thought* within social psychology that produce prototypical targets of discrimination—Black men vis-à-vis racism and White women vis-à-vis sexism.³ The employment of these prototypes facilitates conceptualizations of discrimination that ignore or obscure individuals who are not prototypical (i.e., male and/or White). In pursuing this argument, we should be careful to note that we are not the first to call attention to psychology's limited engagement with intersectionality (Cole 2009; McCall 2005; Shields 2008; Tucker and Mitchell-Kernan, 1990). Some scholars have referred to similar arguments regarding intersectionality as psychology's "intersectional invisibility" (Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach, 2008). As a result of this work, psychology is coming to acknowledge that the meaning of race depends on gender (and vice versa [Cole 2009]). However, the field still needs to theorize further the results from this intersection of race and gender. Our aim is to illustrate the methodological challenges to doing so.

This is not to say that one should become preoccupied with intersectional psychology as merely a "methodological challenge" (Shields 2008). At the same time, the methodological frames of disciplines play important roles in forming disciplinary habits of thought and, consequently, provide important information about the route a discipline can take to arrive at a more intersectional approach (McCall 2005; Walker et al., 2004). As Elizabeth Cole (2009) observes, the most important stages of research—from conceptualization, sampling, operationalization of variables, and analyses, to interpretation—can be fundamentally shaped by intersectional thinking. Other scholars have advanced similar claims: that intersectional approaches to psychology can challenge fundamental assumptions about psychological processes and methodologies (Goff et al., 2008; Mahalingam 2007; Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach, 2008; Sesko and Biernat, 2010; Shields 2008). The following three examples of new research using an intersectional lens illustrate this point.

Example 1. In work by Goff and colleagues (2008), primarily White undergraduates rated Black men as more attractive than White men, but Black women as less attractive than White women. This was due to the influence that race had on perceptions of masculinity, with subsequent gender influences on ratings of attractiveness. Black men were rated as more masculine (and therefore *more* attractive) than their White counterparts. However, Black women were also rated as more masculine (and therefore *less* attractive) than their White counterparts. In this way, gender colors the way that race is perceived, and vice versa. In fact, this research demonstrated that being perceived as Black can make it more difficult for Black women to be perceived as women. That is, "seeing Black" made it harder to "see woman." This unique conclusion is attained by adopting an intersectional perspective in which race and gender mutually construct each other.

Example 2. Let's now focus on sample size. As Cole (2009) rightly observes, if researchers do not include samples of sufficient diversity, it is simply not possible to conduct analyses that will reveal differences between intersectional groups. This is an inherent limitation of the 2×2 factorial design—the need to delimit the world into four discrete categories inhibits meaningful exploration of variation within any one of those four categories. Which social identities are chosen as the variables of interest, and which are excluded in the 2×2 design limits intersectional thinking.

Example 3. Consider now the operationalization stage of research methodology. If identity is conceptualized as a property of individuals—rather than something that is enacted and negotiated within contexts of stratified power—statistical methods that analyze each aspect of identity as unrelated and uncorrelated cannot draw meaningful conclusions about the ways in which identity is socially constructed.⁴ In other words, conceiving an identity as something that people *have*, rather than something that people *negotiate*, makes it far more difficult to study the ways in which identities are shaped and practiced under particular social conditions. When interpreting one's data, it is easy to lose sight of intersectional thinking.⁵

These three key phases of research methodology—sampling, operationalization, and interpretation—are established and enacted differently in the subfields of psychology and, consequently, represent problems unique to each subfield. Our focus in the current paper is on experimental social psychology, one of the main subfields of psychology concerned with examining prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination at an individual level. We have organized our arguments into three sections.

In the first section, we illuminate how experimental social psychology “enacts” science, and how its methodological habits of mind and craft can produce obstacles to intersectional thinking. In the second section, we present original experimental data to support our claim that intersectional “invisibility” creates prototypical targets of discrimination. We suggest that these prototypical targets call to mind specific prototypical types of discrimination-related injuries, hampering our ability to conceptualize of discrimination more broadly. Finally, in the third section, we review the upward trajectory and momentum of intersectional research in social psychology that provide cause for optimism. We wish to provoke conversation and debate within psychology and beyond about what counts as discrimination, how to study it, and how to ameliorate the injuries inflicted on individuals at the conceptual margins of identity-based harms.

EXPERIMENTAL SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY: THE GENERAL PROBLEM

In order to understand how social psychology has produced a science that simultaneously provides invaluable insights into the nature of prejudice while also downplaying intersectional identities, one must first understand how the subfield is constructed. The goal of social psychology is to understand how our social worlds influence individual and group attitudes, cognitions, emotions, and behaviors (Allport 1954). Therefore, the study of stereotypes (cognitive beliefs), prejudice (affective or emotional reactions), and discrimination (behavioral acts) from both the target's and perceiver's perspectives make up a central part of the discipline. Though an individual may choose from a nearly infinite variety of research methods to

achieve that end, social psychologists have tended to prefer experimentation to other methods because of the high disciplinary value on causality (Wilson et al., 2010). Specifically, social psychologists prefer the 2×2 factorial research design where two independent variables are manipulated to test their influence on a single dependent variable. By manipulating independent variables of interest (i.e., race or gender), researchers are able to make stronger causal arguments than are permitted when discerning patterns from data where other factors (i.e., class, education, and political ideology, etc.) also systematically vary with the variables of interest. The goal of establishing narrow causal relationships between independent and dependent variables is so fundamental in psychology that psychology methods textbooks routinely declare that a study's ability to generalize to the world outside the laboratory is nearly irrelevant if it is not able to produce a strong causal inference (Pelham and Blanton, 2006).

It is within this context that social psychologists conduct research on fundamental conceptions of race and gender. Within these disciplinary constraints, studying racial discrimination often involves varying the race of a target while holding other relevant factors constant. For instance, in a celebrated study on the effects of race and incarceration history, Devah Pager (2003) experimentally varied the race of individuals who were sent to apply for jobs, while keeping the strength of their qualifications identical. Consistent with hypotheses, White applicants were called back for a second interview 2.4 times more often than their equally qualified Black counterparts. By holding other relevant factors constant, Pager demonstrated that race significantly influenced applicant outcomes. The study design was straightforward and the interpretation obvious. Yet, how might that same study have been conducted if gender, in addition to race, were also to be systematically manipulated?

First, while the original study required 350 participants to test its effects, the new version would likely need to include 700 participants to accommodate the additional factor of gender. That is, adding gender as an independent variable would double the number of conditions in one's study, resulting in the need to (at least) double the number of participants. The number would, of course, surge to 1400 if Pager wanted to vary the gender of the potential employers, and to 2800 if the goal was to manipulate the race and gender of both employers and applicants. Importantly, this 2800-applicant design would still only be sufficient to test for racial discrimination between Black and White applicants. A broader investigation of racial diversity, including Latinos, Asians, American Indians, and other racial groups would require thousands more participants. Obviously, this presents a constraint with regard to *sampling*.

Second, while Pager's findings were straightforward when the applicants were all the same gender, the results might have been more difficult to interpret if gender was also manipulated. That is, if hiring behaviors towards Black women differed from Black men, how might one explain this result? Some theories suggest that Black men would face harsher treatment in employment contexts than would Black women (Sidanius and Pratto, 1999). However, other research demonstrates that Black women are seen as less "appropriately feminine" (Goff et al., 2008), a perception that could negatively impact hiring in jobs in which femininity is valued. Which explanation would be responsible for sex differences within Blacks? Unless Pager was interested in the intersection of race and gender *per se*, differences between Black men and women applicants would create a theoretical puzzle to be solved, rather than providing an elegant test of the researcher's original hypothesis about how race influences job prospects. An intersectional approach to the same

question of racial discrimination and job prospects, then, might produce an overly complex study with results that are difficult to theorize, creating problems of *interpretation*. It is not surprising that researchers may eschew fully intersectional approaches to the study of race, as they can be difficult to handle logistically, require complex methodology, and at times be difficult to interpret theoretically (Shields 2008; Walker et al., 2004).

The methods for studying gender bias offer little reprieve from these same obstacles. Just as Pager's study of racism only manipulated the race of applicants, gender discrimination is often studied solely by manipulating the gender of the target. Consequently, adding race as a factor to one's design presents the same methodological drawbacks as adding gender to racial discrimination research.

There is a disciplinary tendency for social psychological science to value experimental rigor and causality over the ability to generalize beyond the lab (Dovidio and Esses, 2007; Pelham and Blanton, 2006; Pettigrew 1998). This methodological preference reduces the likelihood that social psychologists will draw on other kinds of intersectional research that examine how individuals in a real world or naturalistic environment are affected by their multiple identities. This bias tends to limit social psychological research on the way that race and gender work in combination in naturalistic environments—much less how they interconnect with other social identities such as class, sexual orientation, phenotypic stereotypicality, ableness, age, and religion.

Not surprisingly, the result is a discipline that is methodologically constrained in its attempts to study race and/or gender together (McCall 2005; Shields 2008). Therefore, even researchers who approach the issues of identity through an intersectional lens may find it a difficult task at the beginning of their careers when publication is essential, and prohibitively novel compared to their current studies by the time they have achieved the necessary success to explore such issues. Consequently, a social psychology of racial and gender discrimination has emerged that tends to assume that race and gender are distinct and fundamental units of social identity (Kurzban et al., 2001). Further, researchers wishing to investigate intersectional approaches to race and gender discrimination must negotiate the theoretical conceits that psychological science has established in studying racism and sexism. In the following sections, we review experimental social psychological science's two central literatures regarding the study of sexism and racism: the science of person perception and the measurements of discrimination. We focus on these two key components because they are fundamental components to the understanding of prejudice and discrimination. The study of person perception focuses on the perceivers' perspectives, and how both their social identities and the social identities of their interaction partners can lead to prejudice and discrimination. We also focus on the ways in which gender and racial discrimination are measured and quantified, as key components in the development of a literature on prejudice and discrimination. If there are biases in the basic measurement tools that researchers use to determine whether bias exists, then subsequent literatures that develop based from such measures will have limitations. As we will explain, for the most part, intersectionality is marginalized in both contexts (person perception and methodological measurements) in ways that limit our understanding of both: the processes by which we categorize and the metrics by which we understand discrimination. Importantly, while previous research has articulated the ways in which psychology in general and social psychology in particular have failed to incorporate intersectional theorizing in basic research (Cole 2009; Goff et al., 2008; Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach, 2008), the present review focuses more narrowly on how methodological praxis inhibits moving towards incorporating

intersectional thinking. Our intention is to provide a more detailed roadmap for the problems of intersectionality within the discipline and the solutions for incorporating it.

From “Basic Categories” to Intersectional Subjects

In order to study group-based discrimination, one must first have an understanding of social groups and how individuals perceive others in a social context. Within the psychological science of social groups, the dominant unit of analysis is an individual's social identity (Brewer 1988; Fiske et al., 1999; Fiske and Neuberg, 1990; Gilbert 1998). Social identities function as both internal benchmarks (i.e., “I feel like a person from this group”) and as external cues (“I believe that you belong to this group”) (Gilbert 1998; Markus et al., 1997; Tajfel and Turner, 1979). Because social identities are so fundamental to the ways that people and groups interact, and because the nature of social psychology is to investigate the ways in which our social world influences individual and group attitudes, cognitions, emotions, and behaviors, psychologists have developed an extensive literature on social identities. An important piece of this literature on person perception (that is, how individuals view other people and their social identities) involves so-called “basic” units of perception and categorization (Brewer 1988; Fiske et al., 1999; Fiske and Neuberg, 1990; Goff et al., 2008; Shields 2008).

In the person perception literature, a “basic” category of an individual's social identity is commonly understood as a category that is encoded in an “automatic and mandatory” (Cosmides et al., 2003, p. 173) fashion by a perceiver. Individuals cannot help but see these fundamental categories almost instantaneously when they perceive a person. For over a quarter century, psychologists have agreed that there are three such categories—age, sex, and race—that human minds encode upon initially perceiving an individual (Brewer 1988; Fiske et al., 1999; Fiske and Neuberg, 1990). These three categories are also considered “basic” because every person may be categorized in terms of each (i.e., every individual has a race, a sex, and an age), and because categorizing people in terms of each occurs early in the time sequence of person perception, often within milliseconds of first sight (Brewer 1988; Fiske and Neuberg, 1990).

Yet, while this evidence has served as compelling support for the “basic” level of each social identity category, it could just as easily support an intersectional conceptualization of person perception in which each category mutually influences the other (Goff et al., 2008). Though everyone belongs to each category, and they are all encoded nearly automatically and immediately, it is not self-evident that each category is or should be encoded discretely. Since everyone has a race, age, and sex, it is possible that we encode each category simultaneously, creating separate categories for young (as opposed to old) Black women or middle-aged Latino (as opposed to Asian) men (Goff et al., 2008).

Despite this reasonable alternative model of categorization, researchers have tended to assume that person perception is built upon single and independent category perceptions. This belief, in turn, has filtered into the ways in which social scientists study the lived experience of social identities. Research on discrimination (Swim and Stangor, 1998), like research on person perception, tends to focus on the “target's perspective” in racial and gender identity and tends to imagine that individuals see themselves in terms of discrete identities (i.e., gender *or* race) rather than intersectional identities (i.e., gender *and* race). Further, because of the methodological burden of crossing sex and race in experimental designs, and because of the

tendency to undertheorize about those intersections, this process leaves the study of gender, race, and discrimination prone to reducing intersectional complexity to one discrete identity.

In the case of experimental psychological science, studying how groups see themselves tends to be reduced to a monolith, dominated by the prototypes for each group (Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach, 2008). Based on group prototypes, the study of non-Whites' experiences of their own identity is likely to be reduced to the study of non-White *men's* identities, while the study of women's identity is likely to be reduced to the study of *White* women's identities. This exclusion of perspective need not be intentional on the part of the researcher. As we have described above, in addition to the methodological challenges that provide barriers to intersectional research, much of the existing research on racial identity has not provided a rich theorization of the ways that women and men may differ in terms of their racial identity, nor does it look closely at how to measure differences in levels of racial identification (Cross 1991; Cross and Vandiver, 2001; Phinney 1992; Sellers et al., 1997; Sellers et al., 1998; Vandiver et al., 2002). Without existing theory or experimental evidence to use as a basis, intersectional hypotheses are excluded from research designs, and therefore largely underdeveloped.

Similarly, research on gender identity has tended not to address racial differences in conceptions or strength of gender identity (Bem 1974, 1981; Bosson et al., 2005; Bosson et al., 2006; Vandello et al., 2008; Wood and Eagly, 2009). Research on cross-cultural gender identity often has seen its goal as attempting to find a true and universal metric for "manliness" and "womanliness," collapsing differences across intracultural (and interracial) groups. The result is to downplay racial, ethnic, or cultural differences in the study of how individuals construct masculine and feminine identities (Martin and Finn, 2010; Schertzer et al., 2008).

There is, however, some work in the domain of person perception that challenges the notion that individuals use independent "basic categories" during person perception (Goff et al., 2008; Johnson et al., 2012; Navarrete et al., 2010). This work is encouraging in terms of what it suggests for incorporating intersectionality into social psychology.

In a study, Phillip Atiba Goff and his colleagues (2008) found evidence supporting the notion that the "basic categories" of race and gender may not be "basic" at all. This research asked participants to identify the race and sex of Black and White men and women. In one study, participants were asked to identify these characteristics while looking at full-body silhouettes of individuals as they moved. In another, they were asked to do the same while looking at faces. Across both these studies, participants were exceedingly accurate at categorizing faces by gender. This result should not be surprising, as gender is among the first things we notice about an individual; it is uncommon to not remember someone's gender once we have met them; and it may be unsettling if one cannot discern someone's gender.

When asked to judge the gender of individuals in four groups, the most frequent error participants made was to characterize Black women as Black men (Goff et al., 2008). This outcome was particularly surprising when participants could see full-body silhouettes of the targets. Importantly, when participants saw full-body silhouettes of Black and White women who were not moving in any way, participants made no sex categorization errors—but could not determine the race of either. It was only when targets were moving that their race could reliably be determined, and only at this point that participants began to make sex categorization errors for Black women. It is also important to note that participants reliably miscategorized Black women as White more frequently than Black men. Therefore Black women were miscatego-

alized in terms of their race more frequently than their male counterparts, and in terms of their gender more frequently than their White counterparts.

This study suggests that perceiving gender along with race may interfere with perceptual processes. Perhaps more importantly, this research implies that the “basic” level of person perception is more complex than identifying single categories such as race, sex, and age; examined intersectionally, it appears that perceiving one of these categories seemed to interfere with perception of the other (Freeman et al., 2010; Johnson et al., 2012).

Research investigating the ways that racial and gender cues complicate one another has grown more common in recent years (Goff et al., 2008; Johnson et al., 2012). However, research on downstream processes such as discrimination and bias has not provided similar advances in empirical tests of intersectionality. Such empirical work on intersectionality may encourage richer conceptions of important inter-group processes such as discrimination, a concern we outline below.

From Mono-Categorical Discrimination to Intersectional Discrimination: Quantifying Bias

As we have argued, experimental social psychological research on racial and gender bias and discrimination has privileged mono-categorical focuses instead of intersectional approaches. With respect to quantifying bias, there are a number of *operational* obstacles to studying bias intersectionally. For instance, while some of the most famous studies of racial bias include group members who are non-prototypical, such as Black women (Gaertner and Dovidio, 1977), they have often used same-sex pairings in order to avoid the complications that arise when individuals of different races interact across gender lines. As social psychology has shifted towards social cognitive approaches (Dovidio 2001), increasing numbers of researchers have focused on how the application and activation of stereotypes function as a mechanism for producing racial bias (Devine 1989; Dovidio et al., 2002; Greenwald et al., 1998). In many of these contexts, there need not be a specific out-group target (men or women) in order for researchers to observe participants engaging in stereotyping a racial out-group—just priming the group or group name itself is sufficient to produce effects.

For example, in research on implicit biases, researchers may expose participants to negative stereotypes about Blacks subliminally, and then ask questions about how they feel about Blacks “in general” (Devine 1989). In this case, neither the stereotypes nor “Blacks in general” specify a gender. However, the stereotypes most often associated with Blacks (e.g. violent, aggressive, uneducated, athletic, and criminal) are more associated with men than women “in general” (Goff et al., 2008; Merritt and Harrison, 2006; Sesko and Biernat, 2010; Zárate and Smith, 1990). Therefore, even if a researcher is attempting to limit attention to racial stereotypes, people think of non-White stereotypes in gendered terms. This fact has come to be acknowledged by researchers in the field who assume gender differences in discrimination such that, to the degree they must choose a gendered target, the tendency is to choose non-White men rather than non-White women (Correll et al., 2007; Eberhardt et al., 2004; Goff et al., 2008; Kahn and Davies, 2011). Further, the study of within-group racial stereotyping based on stereotypicality (e.g., how strongly individuals exhibit the physical features typical of their racial group) also tends to limit its focus to racial minority men (Blair et al., 2002; Blair et al., 2004; Eberhardt et al., 2004; Eberhardt et al., 2006; Kahn and Davies, 2011). Research claiming and confronting racial prejudice tends to *oversample* non-White men (Kaiser and Miller, 2001, 2003).

It is an additional task to theorize about and account for the potentially complicating role of gender in the production of racial biases. However, engaging with intersectional identities in research is a much-needed next step.

Similarly, investigations of gender bias have less often also addressed racial differences in discrimination (Biernat and Vescio, 2002; Eagly et al., 2004; Glick and Fiske, 1996; Wood and Eagly, 2010). Rather than investigate the ways in which race might influence evaluations of women, most psychological researchers end up limiting the number of factors other than gender to interpret their pattern of findings. For example, research on women who claim or confront sexism has focused primarily on White women, a classic problem of sampling and analysis described earlier (Dodd et al., 2001; Kaiser and Miller, 2004; Roy et al., 2009). International approaches to gender discrimination also tend not to address complicating questions of race, ethnicity, and culture in favor of commonalities (Eastwick et al., 2006; Glick et al., 2000; Glick et al., 2004).

Again, we are not arguing that malice underwrites research practices that under-explore the experiences of women and non-Whites. Rather, we argue that methodological limitations of experimental psychological science produce a momentum that relies on mono-categorical explorations of person perception and identity. This preference, in turn, establishes a credible literature on the topic that encourages younger researchers to continue in this tradition.

One can tell a similar story with respect to measuring discrimination. Here, too, intersectionality is often marginalized. And here, too, methodology is an important factor. Studying discrimination requires that researchers measure a behavioral outcome, such as resources allocated to women as opposed to men. Consequently, if that mode of discrimination is more likely to target one race or gender over another, then this would produce a science of discrimination that undervalued the experience of certain intersectional groups. Racial and gender discrimination tend to be conceptualized in terms of prototypical group memberships (Inman and Baron, 1996; Smith and Zárate, 1992; Zárate and Smith, 1990). These group memberships can be seen as producing and reinforcing race and gender prototypes (Goff et al., 2008). It would not be surprising to find that the ways we measure discrimination are also influenced by these prototypes. Overreliance on examining race and gender prototypes may thereby produce a correspondingly limited science of discrimination.

Reliance on examining race and gender prototypes would not be problematic for researchers if women of all races or non-White men and women experienced discrimination similarly. However, there is considerable evidence that this assumption is false (Goff et al., 2012; Levin et al., 2002; McDonald et al., 2011; Navarrete et al., 2009; Navarrete et al., 2010; Sidanius and Veniegas, 2000). For instance, the traditional areas of research on discrimination and inequality regarding non-Whites are in employment, education, and criminal justice (Cashin 2005; Jones 1996; Sidanius and Pratto, 1999). In each of these areas, Black women outperform Black men by most standards of success (i.e., employment rates, income controlling for education, and educational attainment) while the story is more mixed for other races (Cashin 2005; Sidanius and Pratto, 1999). Some researchers have argued that such gender differences in racial inequality stem from a tendency for the men of subordinate groups to be targeted disproportionately in intergroup conflict (McDonald et al., 2011; Navarrete et al., 2010; Sidanius and Pratto, 1999). Others suggest that to pit racial discrimination faced by non-White men against discrimination faced by non-White women creates a false dichotomy, arguing that racial discrimination is likely to be shaped intersectionally (Crenshaw 1989; Tucker and Mitchell-Kernan, 1990).

There is considerable evidence that non-White women experience qualitatively different forms of racial discrimination from non-White men. For instance, Black women disproportionately shoulder the load of single parenthood (Wilson 1997). Sociologist William Julius Wilson (1997) argues that this disproportionality is a direct result of the rapid growth in joblessness and incarceration among Black men, leaving Black women to negotiate different circumstances of close relationships and family rearing than any other group of women. Black social movements have long charged that media and popular culture portray Black women as less attractive than White women and this has consequences for both individual women and Black communities (Goff et al., 2008). These factors are part of the social construction of Black women as less “feminine” than White women, a social construction lamented by Black women as long ago as Sojourner Truth’s famous refrain, “Ain’t I a woman?” (Goff et al., 2008).

Taken together, this research suggests that Black men and women confront gender-specific racial realities and therefore experience discrimination in qualitatively different ways. We could deepen our understanding of these different experiences of discrimination if we made them the focus of psychological measures of discrimination, rather than attempting to focus on “gender-neutral” modalities of discrimination. Thinking of discrimination through a “gender-neutral” lens, focusing on education, employment, and criminality tends to privilege the discrimination faced by stigmatized men and overlook discrimination faced by stigmatized women.

There is a related problem in the research on the effects of ambient stereotypes on the performance of women in math and science domains (Beilock et al., 2007; Forbes and Schmader, 2010; Johns et al., 2005; Murphy et al., 2007; Rydell et al., 2009; Schmader and Johns, 2003; Spencer et al., 1999; Steele et al., 2002). This research commonly looks at groups of women who are all mostly White, and it does not explore racial differences. The subjects examined with regard to achievement in so-called “STEM” fields (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) are likely to be high-achieving female students, who are disproportionately White and Asian (George-Jackson 2011). Discrimination that is likely to target non-White women disproportionately—for example, discrimination with regard to perceptions of attractiveness and patterns of marriage—have less often been used in measures of discrimination and seldom appear in the social psychological research literature (Trail et al., 2012).

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What we are arguing thus far is that the psychological science of race and gender prejudice and discrimination understands far more about racial bias towards non-White men than toward non-White women, and more about gender bias towards White women than toward non-White women. We have conceptualized problems and tools for measuring prejudice and discrimination that reflect our perception of the biases and discrimination facing those groups. As a result, the current ways that discrimination is discussed and measured do not facilitate research on the intersectional nature of forms of discrimination. We need to challenge the field to develop a more nuanced conception of the intersectional nature of discrimination.

We also argue that the psychological sciences should and can rise to the challenge of thinking intersectionally about these issues. In the next section of this article, we present quantitative data and an original experiment suggesting both the possibility for sound science in this area and the urgency for psychological science to investigate further intersectional discrimination. Additionally, we review emerging

research that seeks to provide new methods, conceptualizations, and theories to the study of intersectional discrimination.

WHO FACES DISCRIMINATION AND HOW WE CAN STUDY THAT

This article is designed to investigate the ways in which social psychology's implicit assumptions of race and gender have influenced its study of discrimination. Here we report on further experimental research that might reveal how changing underlying conceptions may lead to successful intersectional analysis of race and gender.

Previously, Goff and his colleagues (2008) found that Blackness was strongly associated with "manliness," a result replicated by others in subsequent research (Johnson et al., 2012). Working toward a more nuanced intersectional analysis, we hypothesized that, if Blackness was equated with manliness, anti-Black discrimination might be equated with anti-Black discrimination against Black *men* in particular. Similarly, we hypothesized that White women may be the prototypical targets of gender discrimination. These hypotheses are consistent with previous research on prototypes and exemplars of discrimination (Inman and Baron, 1996; Sesko and Biernat, 2010; Smith and Zárate, 1992; Zárate and Smith, 1990). However, previous research has not provided direct evidence that individuals *spontaneously* generate race-and-gender-specific exemplars when asked to imagine targets of discrimination.

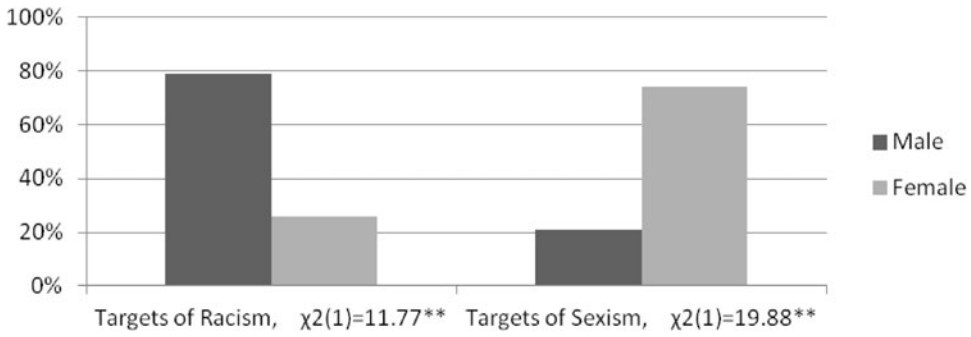
In order to provide a concrete test of these hypotheses, we recruited participants to complete a short experiment about what comes to mind when they imagine targets of discrimination.

Participants: Thirty-four students from a large public university on the West Coast were recruited to complete a short online survey. Twenty-nine were White, and twenty-two were women.

Procedure: Participants were told that, "Racist interactions usually involve perpetrators (someone doing something racist) and targets (someone having something racist done to them)." They were then instructed: "Please take a moment to think of a TARGET of racism." Participants were then asked to respond to two instructions: "Please indicate the gender of the person you thought of" and, "Please indicate the race/ethnicity of the person you thought of." Participants were asked to identify the sex—male or female—and the race—White, Black, Latino, Asian, American Indian, or Other. We also gave participants an identical set up, and a set of prompts regarding targets of sexism. These items were counterbalanced and all participants answered all questions, making this a two-cell within-subject design.

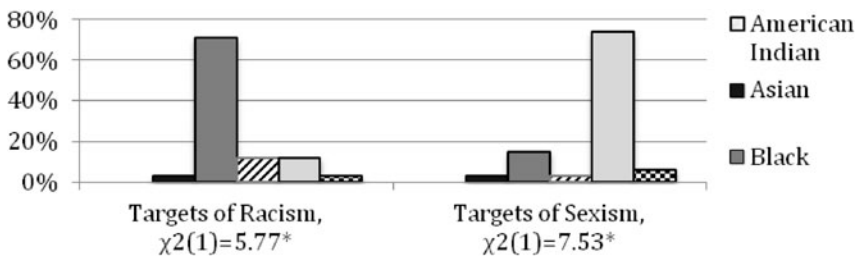
Results: Observing no effects of question order, we collapsed across participants to determine whether respondents thought of the targets of racism in gender-specific terms and the targets of sexism in race-specific terms. As Figure 1 illustrates, results confirmed that participants did respond in the hypothesized race- and gender-specific ways. 79% of respondents indicated that the target of racism they imagined was a man, significantly different from the 21% who imagined a woman as the target of racism, $\chi^2(1) = 11.77, p < .001$. Importantly, 100% of those indicating that their imagined target of racism was Black (71% of the total sample) indicated that this Black target was a man. Similarly, 74% of respondents indicated that their imagined target of sexism was White, with 100% of these indicating that the target was a White woman. This result was significantly different from all other races indicated, $\chi^2(1) = 7.53, p = .01$. (See Figure 2.)

Discussion: Taken together, the outcome of this experiment provides further evidence in support of the argument that a lack of intersectional thinking inhibits



Note. $^{**} = p < .01$.

Fig. 1. Gender Distribution of Targets of Racism and Sexism



Note. $^* = p < .05$.

Fig. 2. Ethnicity Distribution of Targets of Racism and Sexism

thoughts about non-White women. Of the total responses to questions about both racism and sexism, 72% answered in terms of Black men or White women. By contrast, non-White women represented only four total responses, or 6% of the total answers. Again, this suggests that when laypersons imagine the consequences of discrimination, they have in mind prototypical race/gender targets (i.e., non-White men and White women) that, in turn, may obscure the harms that accrue to non-White women.

REASONS FOR OPTIMISM ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF INTERSECTIONAL ANALYSIS TO PSYCHOLOGY

Emerging psychological research has begun to discuss the problems of neglecting to construct research designed to examine intersectionality, and to provide methodological, conceptual, and theoretical tools to advance its use.⁶ Growing numbers of researchers are interested in examining the ways that gender influences race (Cummings and Jackson, 2008; Dottolo and Stewart, 2008; Goff et al., 2008; Goff et al., 2012; Townsend 2008). Younger scholars have taken up the challenge of intersectional analysis. For example, a May 2011 search of PsycInfo (the database of psychology articles) revealed forty-one dissertations written since 2007 with “intersectionality” listed as a keyword.

This expanded literature reveals that social psychology faces a task of urgency: ignoring intersectional identities restricts our ability to understand the nature and

the consequence of intergroup relations. Cole (2009) outlines a series of methodological and conceptual constraints that ought to accompany intersectional approaches to the study of prejudice and discrimination. Similarly, Stephanie Shields (2008) suggests that rather than seeing intersectional identities as methodological impediments to divining broad scientific principles, psychologists ought to rescale our conceptualization of discrimination such that intersectional prejudice and discrimination represents an important level of analysis at which general principles are developed.

Valerie Purdie-Vaughns and Richard Eibach (2008) seized on this imperative to argue that person perception and discrimination has too long been conceptualized in terms of deviations from the “prototypical person.” Since this “prototypical person” is represented as an upper-middle-class, heterosexual, able-bodied White man, bias is often conceptualized in terms of deviance from this category in terms of a single variable (i.e., gender, race, class, sexual orientation, or ableness) (Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach, 2008). They further argue that those who differ from that norm on more than one dimension (lesbian women, for instance) will be ignored historically, culturally, and politically, resulting in a kind of “intersectional invisibility.” Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach further argue that this invisibility is a compelling reason to construct new methods to study identity, prejudice, and discrimination.

Other researchers argue that empirical evidence shows the need to consider intersectional identities in our understanding of discrimination and prejudice. Some theories of prejudice, namely Social Dominance Theory, have put forth intersectionally-based hypotheses as central tenets (Sidanius and Pratto, 1999). The hypothesis of the “subordinate male target” in Social Dominance Theory, for example, states that discrimination and prejudice will be differentially distributed and targeted against subordinate group men, compared to subordinate group women (Sidanius and Pratto, 1999). There is an increasing number of studies and emerging experimental evidence designed to test these specific intersectional hypotheses. With regards to intersectionality in the sexism literature, scholars are investigating the ways in which target race affects the application of benevolent and hostile sexism (McMahon and Kahn, forthcoming), finding that, unsurprisingly, benevolent sexism (with an emphasis on fragility and purity of women) is differentially applied depending on the race of the target woman. As a result, a more nuanced understanding of prejudice and identity is developing (Levin et al., 2002; McDonald et al., 2011; Navarrete et al., 2009; Navarrete et al., 2010).

Different intersectional subjects experience discrimination differently. Recent research has suggested that Black men’s masculinity may be simultaneously, and uniquely, threatened by the experience of racism (Goff et al., 2012). In a series of studies, Black men who experienced discrimination endorsed “male gender norms” to a greater extent, were more sensitive to masculinity threat cues, and engaged in more compensatory masculine-typed behaviors compared to those that did not experience discrimination. This same masculinity threat is unlikely to occur for Black women, implying that the experience of racism itself constitutes qualitatively different threats for Black men and Black women. In fact, as we have argued, the experience of racial discrimination is itself gendered.

Continuing, research in the field of intimate relations has capitalized on this finding of gender differences in racial discrimination by highlighting the role that marriage partners play in the maintenance of masculinity when it is challenged. For instance, racial discrimination contributed to higher rates of depression for Black men married to Black women who cleave closely to gender norms (Goff et al., Under Review). This was not the case for Black men whose wives had more

flexible gender norms. This “gendering” of racial discrimination is an example of how intersectional thinking can inform conceptions of discrimination and expand the scientific toolbox.

How can the field continue the positive momentum of these and other recent studies? How can we address some of the methodological limitations that hinder the progress of the science behind the study of prejudice and discrimination? As we discussed in this article, social psychology’s adherence to a 2×2 experimental methodology limits the ways in which social identities can interact with and construct each other. At its best, two social identities can be examined, leaving the numerous other identities that individuals hold discounted. While this preference for a 2×2 experimental design may always be a core feature of the discipline, we argue that 2×2 experimental designs should be one tool that researchers employ to tackle intersectional research—but not the only one. Instead, researchers should use field research, qualitative studies, and longitudinal designs that specifically focus on intersectional questions in addition to using experimental studies to precise specific mechanisms. Importantly, translating this research to the real world contexts where they occur—as field and longitudinal research designs allow one to do—has the added benefit of rendering social psychology a more relevant discipline to the lives psychologists hope to affect.

We also recommend greater intersectional thinking at a theoretical level within the domain of prejudice and discrimination. More emphasis should be applied to developing theories in which intersectional identities are core components. Redefining existing social psychological theories in light of an intersectional approach will produce unique hypotheses for men and women of different races and genders. For instance, the effects of stereotype threat on Black students is well documented: concerns with conforming to or being evaluated in terms of negative stereotypes about Black academic achievement depress test scores and strain academic identities (Steele et al., 2002). However, there have been no formal attempts to understand how Black men may differ from Black women in this context. This is particularly important, as the academic achievement gap is far greater for Black men than Black women (Massey et al., 2011). In fact, it could be said that, given the relative dearth of Black men to Black women on research-oriented college campuses, it may be that much research on the effects of stereotyping and discrimination on Blacks is really an intersectional study of their effects on Black women, something that should be addressed formally in the future.

The current momentum within the field of social psychology to conduct research through an intersectional lens exists and is growing. We argue for the need to support its growth and expand its reach.

CONCLUSION

Our ability to deal with broader categories of discrimination is limited by the tendency of both scientific researchers and lay people to think primarily of Black men and White women when conceptualizing discrimination. If we continue limiting our research programs to explorations of prototypes taking one category at a time—rather than categories working dynamically and intersectionally—then our understanding of human experience will be incomplete.

This limited approach has profound implications. Psychological science positions itself as an impartial investigator of each phenomenon in the human condition, an expert source of knowledge about person perception, identity, prejudice, and

discrimination. But we cripple our understanding when we overlook the experiences that have marginalized broad swaths of the population from the “human universals” that psychology explores. Particularly because social psychology is the discipline most central to the study of how prejudice influences behavior, this marginalization within the academy may extend to folk conceptions of what is fundamentally human, further marginalizing groups that already face significant discrimination.

Accordingly, intersectional approaches to discrimination must take seriously the project of making research on multiple social identities possible and necessary to the study of intergroup relations. Just as cultural psychologists began to do nearly a quarter century ago (Markus and Kitayama, 1991), intersectional psychologists can use new methods to challenge assumptions about the ways that intergroup relations function, making visible a more nuanced picture of how discrimination operates and affects those who engage in it and who are targeted by it. This will enrich our theoretical toolbox for examining intergroup struggles.

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NOTES

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2. While we recognize that there is some slippage between the term “androcentric” and sexism, and Eurocentric and “racist,” we are using the terms here as equivalents in order to advance our central point that non-intersectional conceptions of bias within psychology may inadvertently reinforce racial hierarchy within studies of sexism and gender hierarchy within studies of racism.
3. Most of the examples in discussing these issues reflect the tendency of these fields to focus on intersectional research looking at race and gender in terms of Black/White and men/women intersectionality. The concept of intersectionality extends beyond these two categories and our observations are neither intended to be exhaustive nor exclusive.
4. It is possible to perform statistical operations to examine interactions of those statuses. Other statistical approaches allow researchers: (a) to consider the manner in which aggregated things affect an outcome, or (b) to enter each in a stepwise regression to examine influence on outcomes. Statistical tools are available, then, to perform more sophisticated intersectional analyses (Seng et al., 2012).
5. Cole also urges psychologists to resist treating data obtained from one group as normative and from the other as deviant—a common narrative that is obviously and unnecessarily vulnerable to group-based stereotyping.
6. A 2013 special issue of the journal *Sex Roles* featured articles devoted to producing an intersectional perspective on sexual orientation (Parent et al., 2013), and a 2008 issue focused on intersectionality and gender discrimination (Bowleg 2008; Dottolo and Stewart, 2008; Shields 2008; Warner 2008).

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