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REPLY

Diversity Science: Who Needs It?

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What is diversity science and who needs it? This response addresses these and other themes and challenges raised by 11 excellent commentaries. Others include: What are the assumptions of diversity science regarding difference? Is diversity science constrained to the study of multiculturalism and colorblindness? Are race and ethnicity the only dimensions of difference worth studying? At which level of analysis should diversity scientists work and with which types of variables? Should diversity science address the experiences of both majority and minority groups? Should diversity science reside solely on U.S. soil? Is diversity science already in motion (i.e., has the train already left the station)? and Is social psychology a particularly useful site for diversity science?

In this issue 11 commentaries reinforce the need for a diversity science. Although their visions for a comprehensive diversity science may differ, the fundamental message is clear: A science of diversity—built upon the foundation of a voluminous body of work on intergroup relations, stereotyping, and prejudice in social psychology—will shed light on the existence, interpretation, and construction of human difference and the perpetuation of inequalities through these processes. In addition to the recognition of this need and enthusiasm for a science of diversity, several themes or challenges emerge from this excellent set of responses, all of which generally center on the task of defining diversity science.

What is diversity science? In short, diversity science is the study of the interpretation and construction of human difference—of why and how difference makes a difference—within the context of existing, historically shaped cultural and structural realities. It extends the traditional social psychological paradigm, which typically focuses on how key aspects of the immediate situation influence behavior (Lewin, 1951; Ross & Nisbett, 1991). As explicated in the target article, diversity science requires a sociocultural framework, which expands the scope of social psychological analysis to include the social structures and cultural meanings within which these immediate situations are embedded (Adams, Biernat, Branscombe, Crandall, & Wrightsman, 2008; M. Cole, 1996; Markus &

Hamedani, 2007; Plaut & Markus, 2005; Wertsch, 1998). As such, it applies notions from cultural psychology (A. P. Fiske, Kitayama, Markus, & Nisbett, 1998; Shweder & Sullivan, 2003) to the study of intergroup relations (Mendoza-Denton & España, this issue).

In addition to culture, diversity science also recognizes the power structures and relations that currently exist in society (DiTomaso, this issue; see also DiTomaso, Post, & Parks-Yancy, 2007; Dovidio, Saguy, & Gaertner, this issue; Guinote & Vescio, 2010; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999) and the perception thereof (S. T. Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002). (I should note that any favoring of culture over structure in the description of a “sociocultural framework” in the target article was not purposeful.) Especially when it comes to intergroup relations, culture and structure are equally important components of sociocultural reality, as suggested in the original graphical depiction of a sociocultural framework for intergroup relations (see Figure 1). In other words, both core cultural ideas about difference (e.g., race and diversity) and about certain groups and structural realities shaped by history and by hierarchy get inscribed into practices and institutions (e.g., laws, education), which inform daily experiences (e.g., school and work), psychological functioning (e.g., emotion and cognition), and behavior (e.g., discrimination). In turn, these processes shape and reproduce cultural and structural patterns.

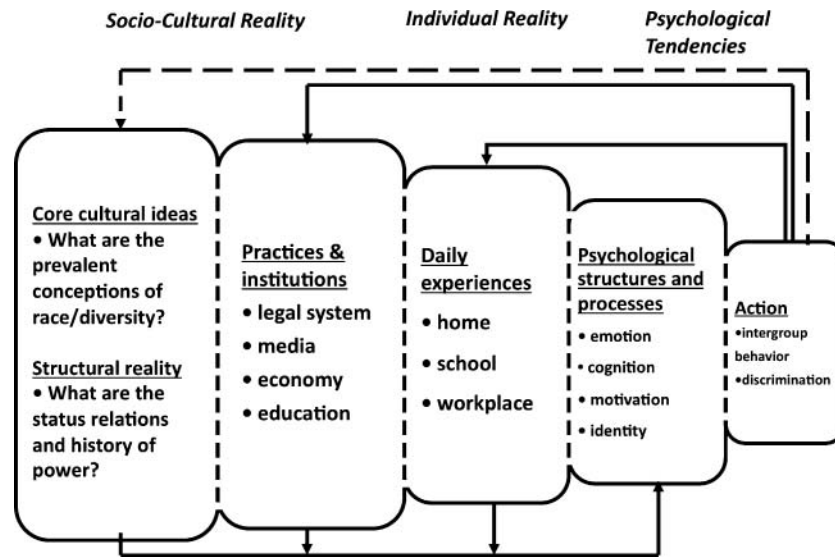


Figure 1. Diagram depicting a sociocultural framework for intergroup relations. Figure adapted from Markus and Kitayama (1994).

However, a sociocultural framework for diversity science perhaps does purposefully “conflate” culture and structure (DiTomaso, this issue). Although structure and culture are not the same thing, structures are animated by culturally derived ideas and ideologies and don’t operate without them. Likewise, culturally derived ideas and ideologies are informed by power structures. (A school, e.g., is a confluence of ideas about the values, goals, and purposes of education, resources including books, desks, classrooms, and a hierarchically organized social structure of students, teachers, principals, and superintendents. Core cultural ideas about schooling—e.g., color-blind or multicultural—both inform and reflect the allocation of resources and power structure.) Therefore, the two are intimately intertwined. Notably, the distinction has likewise been purposefully blurred in most modern definitions of culture (Atran, Medin, & Ross, 2005; Bourdieu, 1977; Giddens, 1984; Hall & Lamont, 2009; Moscovici, 1984; Sewell, 1992).

What are the assumptions of diversity science regarding difference? The widespread assumption in general psychology—and therefore the starting point of psychological inquiry—is sameness (see Mendoza-Denton & España, this issue; Shweder, 1990). In diversity science it is difference (see Jones, this issue). Diversity science assumes that socially constructed differences exist—differences made meaningful by historically rooted structural and cultural patterns. Diversity science assumes that difference is a process that is basic to social life, and that we need to understand it in its very contextually dependent manifestations (Moya & Markus, 2010). It embraces an approach to issues of difference long advanced by Jones (1972/1997): Difference makes a difference because individuals make

it make a difference. Therefore, people cannot simply “get over” difference. Although difference can be a source of prejudice, discrimination, and inequality, it can also be a source of pride, identity, meaning, belongingness, and motivation. Moreover some differences are imposed, whereas others are claimed. What matters is what people, individually and collectively, do with difference.

Moreover, according to a diversity science perspective, people’s beliefs about difference make a difference. As argued by Knowles and Marshburn (this issue), “to understand diversity, one must understand how people understand diversity” (p. 134). This critical component of diversity science is also underscored in Sommers and Babbitt (this issue) and Rosner and Hong (this issue), both of which describe the repercussions of certain lay theories on race and racism. For example, Rosner and Hong describe the influence of essentialist versus social constructionist theories of race, with the latter producing more negative consequences for intergroup outcomes (see Hong, Chao, & No, 2009, for a review; see also Williams & Eberhardt, 2008).

The lay theories that receive the most attention in the target article are multiculturalism and color blindness. Several themes regarding these models of diversity arise from the target article and commentaries. First, at least for White Americans, color blindness appears to be the default model (Peery & Richeson, this issue), and this model has insidious consequences for the experiences of minority groups. It is particularly problematic in the case of groups who already suffer from invisibility (Fryberg & Stephens, this issue). Multiculturalism can have positive consequences for intergroup relations (Peery & Richeson, this issue),

especially if it has a “critical” component (Jones, this issue) or if minority groups are viewed positively (Hahn, Judd, & Park, this issue). However, multiculturalism may lack the ability to address entrenched inequalities and needs to be examined further (Plaut, this issue; Purdie-Vaughns & Dittmann, this issue) including considering the conditions under which emphasizing group differences has deleterious consequences (Hahn et al., this issue). Dovidio et al. (this issue), on the basis of decades of research, suggest commonality as a valuable tool for improving intergroup relations, but they also carefully illustrate the complexity of commonality (e.g., the potential for dominant groups to wield commonality to resist change). They draw parallels between color-blind and multicultural models and one-group and dual-identity representations. Whether seen as color blindness or as adherence to a one-group model, it seems fairly clear that dismissing the existence of subgroup identities advantages dominant groups to the detriment of disadvantaged groups. Yet the color blindness label indexes what the one-group model perhaps obscures—an asymmetry in power or the fact that something is being overlooked or purposely ignored or denied (Knowles & Marshburn, this issue). Color blindness indicates an embracing of a certain view of the world and a certain history of relations between groups with consequences—including an erasure of the experiences of less powerful groups (Fryberg & Stephens, this issue).

Is diversity science constrained to the study of multiculturalism and colorblindness? Absolutely not. The systems of understandings and beliefs about diversity illuminated in the target article are only one of many potential areas for diversity science to explore. These dueling models are just one possible aspect of diversity science, and possibly a good starting point. The models are example of ways in which diversity has been enacted in institutions (particularly law) and they get at the heart of how Americans think about difference. They are potentially a meta-narrative for diversity science, but they should not define or constrain diversity science.

Are race and ethnicity the only dimensions of difference worth studying? No. Owing to powerful processes of racialization throughout history (Omi & Winant, 1994), race and ethnicity have become necessary sites of inquiry, at least in the United States. But as noted both explicitly and implicitly in several of the commentaries and in the target article, they are not the only dimensions of difference on which to base research in diversity science. Because the focus of diversity science is the construction of difference, its scope must include inquiry into dimensions of difference that lie outside of the traditional categories of race and ethnicity. This means not only studying the experience of other dimensions of difference (e.g., gender, disability, class, sexual orientation, religion, region,

nation, language, to name a few) but also the intersection of multiple categories—whether ascribed or nonascribed, visible or invisible (see E. R. Cole, 2009; Jones, this issue; Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008; Sommers & Babbitt, this issue). Of course, some differences “matter” more than others, but there is little utility in holding an Olympics of oppression (Jones, this issue).

At which level of analysis should diversity scientists work and with which types of variables? Because the construction of difference has implications at all levels of psychological functioning, diversity science research could focus on intrapersonal, interpersonal, or intergroup dynamics. For example, although some work may focus on implicit or explicit diversity attitudes or values (Banaji & Greenwald, 1994; Ryan, Hunt, Weible, Peterson, & Casas, 2007; Tropp & Bianchi, 2006), other work might focus on group heterogeneity (Philips, Northcraft, & Neale, 2006; Sommers, 2006), group norms (Plaut, Thomas, & Goren, 2009), interpersonal interaction (e.g., Dovidio, Kawakami, & Gaertner, 2002; Shelton, Richeson, Salvatore, & Trawalter, 2005), or interracial relationships (Page-Gould, Mendoza-Denton, & Tropp, 2008; Shelton, Trail, West, & Bergsieker, 2010). Dependent measures of interest to diversity scientists could include numerous aspects of psychological functioning (affective, cognitive, behavioral, or even neural or physiological; see Rosner & Hong, this issue). Accordingly, diversity science research could focus on a wide range of variables related to how people feel, think and behave when confronted with difference or the expectation of difference—to name just a few, trust (Purdie-Vaughns, Steele, Davies, Dittmann, & Crosby, 2008), change motivation (Saguy, Dovidio, & Pratto, 2008), voting intentions and policy support (Wolsko, Park, & Judd, 2006), eye gaze (J. R. Crosby, Monin, & Richardson, 2008), interpersonal distance (Goff, Steele, & Davies, 2008), cardiovascular performance (Mendes, Blascovich, Hunter, Lickel, & Jost, 2007), and activation in the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex (indicating deliberative processing; see Amodio, 2008) or in the rostral-ventral anterior cingulate cortex (associated with emotion self-regulation; see Derks, Inzlicht, & Kang, 2008). If diversity science is conducted by psychologists, we can expect to see a general disciplinary commitment to understanding individual psychological tendencies (a topic to which I return next). But we should also expect a tighter connection between these variables and individuals’ social worlds, or greater attention to the content of those worlds (e.g., Weisbuch, Pauker, & Ambady, 2009).

Should diversity science address the experiences of both majority and minority groups? Yes. Diversity science holds the potential to uncover aspects of the dominant group experience and identity that help to reinforce systems of inequality (e.g., “White identity

politics"; Knowles & Marshburn, this issue), the experience of traditionally marginalized or disadvantaged groups (e.g., African Americans; Purdie-Vaughns & Dittmann, this issue), or on the experiences of those that have been ignored or rendered invisible by dominant approaches (e.g., American Indians, Fryberg & Stephens, this issue; intersectional identities such as Black women; Jones, this issue; Sommers & Babbitt, this issue). Fryberg and Stephens explicitly use a diversity science approach to highlight the powerful ways in which colorblindness impedes the equal opportunity of self-development and therefore constrains the opportunities and psychological functioning of disadvantaged groups—particularly American Indians. Purdie-Vaughns and Dittmann suggest that fostering "identity safety" might provide the best chance for leveling the playing field of life opportunities (see also Markus, Steele, & Steele, 2000).

Should diversity science reside solely on U.S. soil? Absolutely not. The focus on the United States in the target article stemmed from a perceived need to reflect the very sociocultural perspective being advanced in the article. The recognition that both historically grounded sociocultural realities and psychological processes may differ across cultures was precisely the reason for narrowing the scope to the United States for the purposes of the article. Although not necessarily raised as a critique, the commentaries make clear the need for sociocultural analysis of intergroup relations in other countries and the usefulness of a comparative approach (Hahn et al., this issue). Moreover, Purdie-Vaughns and Dittmann highlight the fact that basic assumptions about pluralism are likely to differ across cultures and therefore diversity science should not take a one (American) size fits all approach. Hahn et al. (this issue) provide compelling discussion of why it is important to take a nation's cultural stance on identity into account when analyzing relations between minority and majority groups—echoed in Purdie-Vaughns and Dittmann. They compare Germany with the United States, arguing that multiculturalism will fare worse in a nation state where national identity is associated with ethnic heritage rather than with more permeable boundaries such as political values or ideology. In addition, Dovidio et al. (this issue) describe fascinating intergroup relations research they have recently conducted in other countries, including Israel and India. Rosner and Hong (this issue) effectively advocate for a more global perspective for diversity science, arguing that diversity science "might incorporate our increasingly diverse world and topics like international intergroup relations, terrorism, religion, and more" (p. 162). It bears noting that most intergroup relations research coming from other countries has been conducted in European countries. Although such work makes important contributions to diversity science, more research is

also needed within Latin American, Asian, and African countries.

Is diversity science already in motion (i.e., has the train already left the station)? Yes. Diversity science has already taken hold. It permeates classes being taught within psychology (e.g., see Purdie-Vaughns & Dittmann, this issue), many social psychologists' research programs (see all articles, this issue), topics of symposia at national conventions (e.g., Banaji, Greenwald, & Steele's symposium "Launching a Diversity Science" at the 2007 annual meeting of the American Psychological Association) and universities (Columbia University's Science of Diversity Symposium, 2006), interdisciplinary research centers and research initiatives (e.g., Northwestern University's Center on the Science of Diversity, the University of Georgia's Center for Research and Engagement in Diversity, UC Berkeley's Diversity Research Initiative) and organizing themes or graduate areas of specialization in psychology departments (e.g., University of Washington). As demonstrated by an informal coding of articles in major psychology/social psychology journals (excluding award articles), even the number of articles with social identity "diversity" in the abstract has increased substantially within psychology (see Figure 2). Of course, not using the word *diversity* does not preclude research or initiatives from qualifying as diversity science, but coding for diversity is one way to generally capture the presence of a diversity perspective.

Is social psychology a particularly useful site for diversity science? Yes. The strong and necessary contribution of social psychology to diversity science is demonstrated not only through the target article but also in the commentaries. As Sommers and Babbitt (this issue), highlighting the power of beliefs and misplaced assumptions about diversity, state, "The ability to support, or refute lay intuition regarding human nature is one of the calling cards of psychological—and, in particular, *social* psychological—research" (p. 164). If diversity science is built in part upon a desire to understand how people understand human diversity (Knowles & Marshburn, this issue), then social psychology has a lot to contribute. In addition, Dovidio et al. (this issue) make the important point that "to understand the human processes that contribute to structural stability or change may require a deep knowledge of the role of social cognition, representations, and consequent motivations that can be found 'inside biased individual minds'" (p. 113). Here I would add that we should consider that individual bias is an important but not necessary condition for the perpetuation of inequality (Bonilla-Silva, 2003) and that "basic" processes inside the mind form in dynamic interaction with particular worlds outside the mind (Mendoza-Denton & España, this issue; Shweder, 1990).

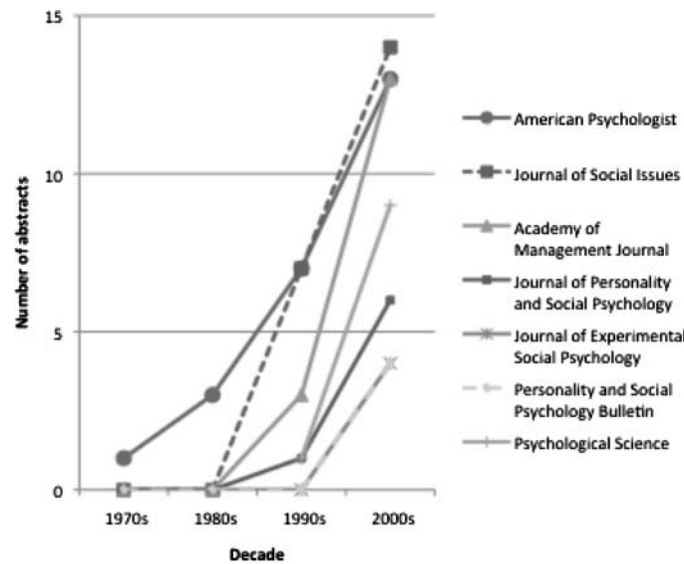


Figure 2. Number of journal article abstracts containing social identity “diversity” in social psychology and related journals since 1970s.

But these are relatively small intradisciplinary differences in analytical perspective. The basic point made by Dovidio et al.—of Mind as mediator—is exactly what distinguishes a psychological perspective from a sociological one. As DiTomaso (this issue) points out, a psychological diversity science, for better or worse, essentially embraces a “micro”-level approach. I would not suggest that psychologists doing diversity science stray from this approach or abandon “the concept of the person” (Mendoza-Denton & España, this issue), but I would suggest that an interdisciplinary approach—intersecting with sociology (DiTomaso, this issue; Oishi, Kesebir, & Snyder, 2009), anthropology (see Mendoza-Denton & España, this issue), political science (Hahn et al., this issue), and other disciplines—would strengthen diversity science.

Social psychology, therefore, can be an important contributor to diversity science. After all, it is the mind, in interaction and constant engagement with other minds (and with the cultural and structural products of those minds), that formulates categories and decides what is “in” and what is “out” (Dovidio et al., this issue; Peery & Richeson, this issue). The mind re-presents “race” and “diversity”—how we should go about thinking about and reacting to human differences (see Hahn et al., this issue; Rosner & Hong, this issue; Sommers & Babbitt, this issue). The mind, in constant interaction with the social world, shapes racial and ethnic identity (Jones, this issue), and inspires the rationalization of inequality (Knowles & Marshburn, this issue). And the mind processes experiences of social environments—whether marked by invisibility (Fryberg & Townsend, this issue) and social identity threat (Purdie-Vaughns & Dittmann, this

issue) or visibility and privilege (Knowles & Marshburn, this issue). As many of the commentators aptly point out, my argument is not that psychology should stray from studying the mind. Rather, when it comes to difference (and as Mendoza-Denton & España, this issue, assert, to psychological functioning in general), we need to recognize that these processes are not fixed or natural and enlarge the scope of inquiry to include the sociocultural.

Who needs diversity science? Diversity science is an engaged science—a science engaged with social problems relevant to big psychological questions that revolve around difference. These may range from interpersonal conflict to institutional discrimination to massacre and genocide. Diversity science calls for current research in social psychology to matter more—by being tied to specific contexts, specific problems, and specific policy decisions they can inform. These have not been our strengths as a field, despite the fact that they shaped the beginnings of the discipline (Lewin, 1946). In other words, diversity science expands the content and reach of social psychology, establishes it as a hub, and increases its relevance. For some that might mean fieldwork (e.g., Cialdini, 2009; Paluck, 2009); for some it might mean linking ideas about difference in people’s minds to ideas about difference in people’s worlds (e.g., Goff, Eberhardt, Williams, & Jackson, 2008). Yet for others it might mean controlled laboratory experiments that as much as possible take into consideration their cultural and structural milieu (e.g., Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008; see also Heine, 2007, for cultural psychology experiments). For others it might mean harnessing the potential of emerging methodologies (Rosner & Hong, this issue). A diversity science does not require a fundamental shift in methodology

but rather careful and creative use, combination, and extension of current ones.

To date, social psychology has played a relatively limited role in shaping discourse and policy on diversity (see F. J. Crosby, Iyer, Clayton, & Downing, 2003). One of the most significant recent contributions of psychology to matters of race and law is the burgeoning literature on implicit bias (see, e.g., Greenwald & Krieger, 2006; Kang, 2005; see Borgida & Fiske, 2008, for other key contributions). Although this contribution represents an important step in bridging legal structures and psychological reality, it paints an incomplete picture of what diversity science has to offer. Diversity science research could also shed considerable light on “constantly shifting boundaries of the realm of equality” and “different notions of equality’s meaning” (Harris, 2000, p. 1929) and on the “elusive nature of discrimination” (Moran, 2003, p. 2367). As Peery and Richeson (this issue) suggest, diversity science could also illuminate the ways in which law and individuals co-construct the cognitive structures that are used to interpret difference and that help to shape inequalities. Of course, the law is not the only institutional “constructor” of difference, and there is room for discourse across many institutional contexts (e.g., education, business, health).

In conclusion, as described in the target article, massive inequalities still exist that are contoured by race and ethnicity and other dimensions of difference. Clearly there are social problems that need solutions. As highlighted in recent legislation, for example, massive resistance to diversity has surfaced in the form of one state’s ban on ethnic studies and a requirement that police officers detain people simply on the basis of suspicion that they are in the country illegally. Clearly there are reactions to diversity that need to be understood. As Fryberg and Stephens argue, “In our increasingly diverse world, a diversity science is critical: It brings arguments about ideologies and their effects out of the realm of ‘sincere ignorance’ and ‘conscious stupidity’ and into the realm of research-based observations and solutions” (p. 118). Diversity science is a call to push the boundaries of social psychology to better address issues of difference in an increasingly complex demographic landscape (see Jones, this issue; Peery & Richeson, this issue; Rosner & Hong, this issue), but it does not represent a call to jettison prior contributions. More work is needed to fully frame a diversity science, but as Jones (this issue) states, “the longest journey begins with the first step” (p. 127). As demonstrated by 11 powerful commentaries, this is a worthwhile journey that can only be strengthened by collaboration and elaboration—both within social psychology and across disciplines. To answer the question posed by the title—who needs diversity science—I would assert we all do.

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Note

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