

# Is Justice Colorblind? A Review of Workplace Racioethnic Differences Through the Lens of Organizational Justice

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## Abstract

It is difficult to draw definitive conclusions about the workplace impact of race from the organizational psychology and organizational behavior literature. Topical coverage is spotty and the findings are fragmented, with little existing theory to orient, integrate, and reconcile them. Consequently, it is unsurprising that public opinion is highly divergent about the influence of race at work, and practitioners are left largely unassisted in determining evidence-based approaches to leveraging this form of difference among their personnel. To fill this void, we review the relevant findings through the lens of organizational justice to help clarify the impact of race on organizational experiences. Our findings suggest that justice indeed varies as a function of race, the magnitude of differences depends on the type of justice, and there are several potentially fruitful areas for additional inquiry.

## INTRODUCTION

Amid a societal “racial reckoning,” emphasis on understanding the role of race and racism in domains such as healthcare, financial services, and criminal justice is intensifying. Workplace racial differences also fall squarely within this spotlight. Still, coverage of race in the fields of industrial and organizational (IO) psychology and organizational behavior/human resource management (OBHRM) has been sporadic at best. In arguably the first comprehensive review of this literature, such oversight led Cox & Nkomo (1990, p. 427) to label racioethnic minorities invisible people and to conclude the following: “The amount of research being done by organizational theorists on race and ethnicity belies the importance of these factors in the workplace. There is a great need for theory development and empirical work around race differences as they relate to virtually all areas of the OBHRM domain.” An update a decade later revealed a slight increase in attention but largely echoed this conclusion (Cox et al. 2001), which was supported again by Proudford & Nkomo’s (2006) review as well as Cascio & Aguinis’s (2008) review of top IO outlets from 1963–2007.

Despite some modest growth in race-related inquiry of late, opinions vary widely about the magnitude of race’s impact in the workplace. For instance, 82% of Black American respondents in a 2019 public opinion poll reported believing that Black employees are treated less fairly than White ones in employment decisions, whereas the percentage of White Americans who agreed was only 44% (Horowitz et al. 2019). A more recent poll produced highly similar results, with 34% of White Americans reporting that race adversely affects how Black employees are treated compared to 63% of Black Americans (Jones & Lloyd 2021). Such discrepant perspectives stand to undermine potential progress toward greater racial equity because (a) members of the racial majority are roughly half as likely as racial minorities to believe there is a need for greater progress and (b) beliefs about the existence and magnitude of discrimination significantly influence support for policies seeking to promote equity (Harrison et al. 2006).

We believe the time has come for an updated, comprehensive review of research on race in the organizational sciences. Moreover, framing this review through the lens of justice should prove enlightening for at least two key reasons. First, such a review can help stimulate additional theorizing and investigation by clarifying what we know and do not know about the impact of race in the workplace. Nearly 30 years have passed since Nkomo (1992) called out our field for largely ignoring the role of race in theorizing about organizational phenomena. We hope to provide a status update on how researchers have responded to that call and identify questions still needing answers. Second, as former US Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan (1983, p. A17) famously said, “everyone is entitled to his own opinion, but not his own facts.” Thus, our review allows the cumulative scientific evidence to determine the nature and magnitude of any racial differences in workplace treatment and outcomes. As researchers and teachers, we have the ability and responsibility to correct common misconceptions that often help maintain systemic inequalities (Amis et al. 2020).

We aim to provide a comprehensive picture of what we have learned in the roughly 20 years since the last review about racial differences across the organizational life cycle (from staffing to separation), shedding light on prevalence, change, and many subtler nuances. We commence by briefly describing the three forms of organizational justice and explaining how a justice lens is insightful for understanding the role of race and racial equity in organizations. Subsequently, we review the existing empirical evidence related to race and its impact on outcomes (distributive justice), processes (procedural justice), and treatment (interactional justice). Importantly, studies do not need to have focused explicitly on organizational justice or race to be included, as bivariate and partial correlations can shed light on racial differences.

Organizing literature according to the type of justice and paying attention to the time of publication should help provide a more nuanced understanding of the role of race at work and how it is (or is not) evolving. For instance, race may have larger effects on procedural and interactional outcomes than distributive ones because the latter are easier for decision-makers to monitor using existing human resource management systems. Additionally, these patterns may have changed over time as pressure has mounted for greater organizational transparency about employee diversity (e.g., Silicon Valley companies wrestling with the decision to disclose diversity information). However, continual procedural and interpersonal inequities can only result in larger (not smaller) distributive inequities over time. Thus, what might appear to be progress (i.e., smaller distributive differences) may be largely a byproduct of our failure to apply a more temporal lens to capture the cascading effects of this shift in the manifestation of organizational racism.

### **Why Focus on Race in the Organizational Sciences?**

As Nkomo (1992, p. 488) noted three decades ago, “for the most part, research has tended to study organization populations as homogeneous entities in which distinctions of race and ethnicity are either ‘unstated’ or considered irrelevant. A perusal of much of our research would lead one to believe that organizations are race-neutral.” Much more recently, Avery & Volpone’s (2020) review of articles published in our top empirical outlets showed that this trend, which they tabbed the universality assumption, remains prevalent. Notably, this downplaying of race persists despite studies demonstrating significant racial differences in organizational experiences and considerable evidence that organizations are racialized [see Ray’s (2019) theory for more on how this became and continues to be the status quo].

Many stakeholders have strong motives for understating the significance of race in organizational settings. Because racial discrimination is illegal, its potential existence has considerable financial ramifications that organizations would like to avoid. Likewise, the social costs associated with being seen as racist have led many majority group members to adopt colorblindness, a perspective aimed at diminishing any impact race might have on cognition or behavior by claiming to ignore its existence. For minority group members, racism in organizations persists. Yet, acknowledging racism can usurp personal agency and could induce feelings of helplessness. Accordingly, members of racioethnic minority groups may view racial discrimination as more likely to happen to in-group members in general than to impact them personally (Taylor et al. 1990). However, hoping or pretending that race is inconsequential at work does not make it so. Social psychological theory is clear that surface-level distinctions such as race often coincide with motivated social cognition that can promote bias and discrimination. Therefore, it is imperative to determine what is known (and unknown) about the impact of race on organizational outcomes, procedures, and experiences.

### **Why the Lens of Organizational Justice?**

Previous research shows that racial minorities commonly have unequal experiences in organizations that often put them at a disadvantage compared to White employees (Cox et al. 2001). We posit that, at its core, this research can be understood through the theoretical lens of organizational justice because it highlights fairness issues within and across the organizational cycle. Organizational justice is multifaceted in delineating among the fairness of outcomes (distributive justice), the processes used to determine outcome allocation (procedural justice), and the treatment and information received from decision-makers (interactional justice). This breadth permits for greater precision in determining not just whether and how much race impacts organizational experiences, but also shedding light on how it does so. Furthermore, it is practical in that it is relatively

intuitive and shares a good degree of overlap with justice constructs often employed in other contexts to account for racial differences (e.g., the legal system). In sum, whereas “the literature on social justice in organizations has not made a clear connection between bias against out-group members and various forms of justice (e.g., distributive, procedural, interactional)” (Stone-Romero & Stone 2005, p. 444), we seek to establish just such a connection by organizing the fragmented literature on race in IO/OB through a justice lens. We begin by focusing on distributive justice.

## **RACE AND DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE**

Racial disparities in the distribution of organizational outcomes and treatment occur across the employment cycle. In the literature, such differences are often discussed in the context of racial discrimination, as individuals experience differential treatment and outcomes based on their racial group membership. These differential outcomes can be conceptualized as differences in distributive justice, particularly to the extent that they are unwarranted. In this section, we discuss research that illustrates and explains racial differences in distributive justice at employment entry points, reward systems, and evaluations.

### **Staffing Decisions**

Prior to the formal selection process, there are often opportunities for organizations to make inroads with prospective applicants. One such opportunity involves targeted recruiting, which entails “all organizational practices and decisions that affect either the number or the types of targeted individuals who are willing to apply for, or to accept, a given vacancy” (Newman & Lyon 2009, p. 299). Although this practice is a general one, it is often advocated as a means to diversify new hires and is both permitted and encouraged by affirmative action legislation and policy. Across two studies, Newman & Lyon (2009) demonstrated that targeting recruits based on cognitive ability, conscientiousness, and diversity can diminish racial differences in hiring (i.e., adverse impact). They concluded that “of the recruiting strategies examined in this study, the one with the theoretically greatest potential for balancing performance and diversity is recruiting generally on cognitive ability and targeting minorities on personality (i.e., Cognitive Minority-Conscientiousness)” (p. 312). More recent evidence suggests providing greater information via recruitment sources during such targeted efforts could help to enhance distributive justice as well by diminishing adverse impact in hiring (McFarland & Kim 2021). Such an approach also may attenuate racial differences in starting salaries by reducing race-based information asymmetries among job seekers (Seidel et al. 2000).

Racial discrimination in the job search and selection processes is well documented. For instance, meta-analytic findings across field experiments (e.g., audit studies) including more than 55,000 applications for 26,326 positions found that Black and Hispanic job applicants consistently received fewer callbacks for jobs than White applicants despite being equally qualified (Quillian et al. 2017). Specifically, the authors found that between 1990 and 2015, racially disparate outcomes in hiring between Black and White applicants remained largely unchanged, with White applicants receiving 36% more callbacks on average than their Black counterparts. The results showed some decline in the gap between White and Hispanic applicants between 1990 and 2010; however, over time, White applicants received an average of 24% more callbacks for jobs than Hispanic job applicants.

Additional findings from a resume audit study examining the effects of a criminal record for job applicants found that the racial disparities in outcomes between Black and White applicants were so severe that White applicants with a criminal record were more likely to receive a callback than

Black applicants without a criminal record (Pager 2003). Furthermore, although having a criminal record hurt both Black and White applicants' chances of receiving a callback, the negative consequences were more detrimental for Black applicants. Where the ratio of callbacks for White nonoffenders relative to offenders was 2:1 (34% versus 17%, respectively), the ratio of callbacks for Black nonoffenders compared to offenders was 3:1 (14% versus 5%, respectively). Mobasseri (2019) further examined the intersection of race, criminal records, and proximity to violent crimes using a quasi-experimental resume audit study that included archival data (organizations' proximity to violent crime was determined through neighborhood crime data collected in the city in which the study took place). Mobasseri found that the callback rate for Black job applicants was 11.6% less than White and Hispanic job applicants. Only 18.2% of Black job applicants received a callback or job offer compared to 38.2% of White applicants and 39.1% of Hispanic applicants. Furthermore, proximity to violent crime events reduced the likelihood of Black applicants receiving a callback by approximately 10%, regardless of whether they had a criminal record; however, similar differential outcomes were not seen for White and Hispanic applicants. Thus, not only do Black applicants experience greater inequitable opportunities to advance in the job selection process relative to White and Hispanic applicants, but Black applicants are also more severely punished than White applicants for factors considered to be blemishes to one's record.

Beyond initial callbacks, there is evidence of unequal outcomes at later stages in the hiring process. For instance, Quillian et al. (2020) meta-analytically examined racial discrimination in hiring at both the callback stage and the interview to job offer stage. Findings from studies conducted in the United States and Europe showed that racial minorities received fewer callbacks than native-born racial majority applicants. When comparing job offer ratios for those who received callbacks, findings showed racial minorities received approximately 50% fewer job offers than racial majority applicants. Job applicants may attempt to improve their chances of receiving job offers by using their social networks to hear about and gain access to job opportunities. In theory, Black applicants who activate their social networks could potentially close the gap in differential hiring outcomes. However, research suggests that this may not be the case. Drawing on national longitudinal survey data, Pedulla & Pager (2019) found that although Black and White job applicants use their social networks at similar rates to aid in the job search process, using these networks is less likely to lead to job offers for Black than for White applicants ( $b = 0.03$  versus  $0.06$ , respectively).

Observed racial differences in the effectiveness of network returns are partially due to Black job seekers being less likely than White job seekers to have connections with someone at the companies to which they are applying, in general, or with someone specifically willing to contact employers on their behalf. The racial deficit in social connections within a company has been shown in other research, with Seidel et al. (2000) finding that Asian [odds ratio ( $OR$ ) = 0.09], Black ( $OR$  = 0.02), and Hispanic ( $OR$  = 0.14) job applicants were significantly less likely to be referred by a friend for a position in a company to which they applied than White applicants. Despite several studies illustrating differential outcomes that favor White job applicants in hiring contexts, recent findings suggest that evaluator ideology can influence the level and direction of differences in evaluations of Black versus White applicants. In a series of online experiments, Reynolds et al. (2021) found that evaluators who scored lower on social dominance orientation (SDO) (i.e., the belief in maintaining a hierarchical social structure) and those who endorsed higher levels of resentment (i.e., hostility directed toward privileged and powerful people) evaluated Black job applicants as more suitable for hiring than White applicants.

The preponderance of evidence in these studies suggests that racial minorities are disadvantaged relative to White job seekers during staffing. Moreover, these differences in outcomes appear to be inequitable, as they are not accounted for by differences in qualifications or merit. We next consider the extent to which this is true for employee appraisals and rewards.

## Performance Evaluations and Rewards

After a job offer is extended, racial differences in distributive justice could also impact compensation. In 2019, the median weekly earnings for Asian employees in the United States were \$1,174 compared to \$945 for White employees, \$735 for Black employees, and \$706 for Hispanic employees (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2020). Hispanic women and Black women earned the lowest compared to both their female and male counterparts. These discrepancies may partly be due to racially disparate outcomes during salary negotiations. For instance, using a sample of more than 3,000 job applicants who accepted job offers at a technology firm, Seidel et al. (2000) found that Asian ( $b = -2.51$ ), Black ( $b = -3.62$ ), and Hispanic ( $b = -1.48$ ) applicants all negotiated significantly lower salary increases (in percentage) than White applicants. Furthermore, evidence shows bias can lead to Black applicants being evaluated more negatively than White applicants for negotiating. Across a series of experiments, Hernandez et al. (2019) found that people holding higher levels of SDO expected Black job applicants to negotiate less than White job applicants and penalized Black applicants who did negotiate. White applicants did not experience such penalties.

Another reason for pay disparities may be racial differences in both performance ratings and the effect of performance ratings on salary growth. For instance, several studies show Black employees are rated significantly lower than White employees by customers and supervisors even when the objective level of performance is controlled (e.g., Elvira & Town 2001, Grandey et al. 2019, Hekman et al. 2010). Holding performance constant, Black employees were rated roughly 9% lower than White employees, and this difference in evaluations coincided with corresponding Black-White differences in salary among the 316 salespeople sampled (Elvira & Town 2001). Interestingly, a subsequent study based in Canada found that whereas racial differences in salary were significant when pay was based on time ( $b = -0.06$ ,  $t = -2.30$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), they were not when pay was tied to output [ $b = -0.01$ ,  $t = -0.11$ , nonsignificant (NS)], which the authors attributed to the latter making discrimination more detectable (Fang & Heywood 2006).

Likewise, Castilla (2008) examined almost 39,000 performance evaluations submitted for 8,818 employees over eight years within one organization and found that of the employees who were evaluated as performing comparably well, Black and Hispanic employees received significantly lower salary increases (both groups were 0.5% lower) than White employees. Additionally, the findings showed that, as expected, there is a positive effect of performance ratings on salary increases; however, this relationship is weaker for Black (compared to White) employees. As such, Black employees receive lower rewards than their White colleagues who received the same performance score.

Following up on those findings within the same organization, Castilla (2015) examined the introduction of an organizational intervention to increase organizational accountability and transparency regarding pay decisions. Specifically, he analyzed performance and pay data from 1996 to 2003, which was before the intervention ( $N = 5,998$  employees), and a second set of data from 2005 to 2009, which was after the intervention ( $N = 6,115$  employees). For the intervention, the organization created a performance-reward committee to increase accountability and ensure that all senior managers were made aware of, and trained in, the process and use of criteria when making merit-based pay decisions. In other words, the intervention increased procedural justice by ensuring the decision-making process was fair and transparent. The findings showed that racial differences in salary increases reached NS levels in the four years following the intervention. These findings illustrate that Black and Hispanic employees are more likely to receive lower pay than White and Asian employees, and there may be differences in how performance is rewarded based on race. However, changes in organizational structures that increase procedural justice via increased accountability and transparency may help facilitate distributive justice.

In addition to these racial disparities in salaries, Castilla (2012) examined whether demographics influence employee terminations, promotions, or transfers after controlling for employee performance. Examining terminations ( $N = 375$ ), he found that Asian Americans ( $b = 0.53$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) were more likely to be fired than White men, although Hispanic employees ( $b = 0.66$ ,  $p < 0.10$ ) and Black employees ( $b = 0.08$ , NS) were not. Regarding promotion events ( $N = 262$ ), the data showed no significant racial differences (Black employees:  $b = -0.03$ ; Asian employees:  $b = -0.33$ ; Hispanic employees:  $b = -0.23$ ). Finally, looking at events on unit transfers ( $N = 684$ ), analyses revealed that Black employees were more likely to be transferred to new units ( $b = 0.27$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) but Asian American employees ( $b = 0.11$ , NS) and Hispanic employees ( $b = 0.19$ , NS) were not. Although this finding is not directly tied to distributive justice per se, it could have negative consequences given tendencies for (a) job reassignments to cluster employees by race (Lefkowitz 1994) and (b) organizational decision-makers devaluing units as a function of racioethnic minority composition (Reskin et al. 1999).

Collectively, these findings indicate the presence of racial differences in salaries during initial negotiations and beyond. Racial minorities are unable to negotiate comparable compensation and experience lower returns for successful job performance than their White counterparts. Moreover, comparable levels of performance coincide with lower appraisal ratings, and these racial differences remain present after accounting for objective performance.

### Leader Selection and Evaluation Outcomes

Beyond differences in selection and compensation, there may be other ways race influences distributive justice among incumbent employees, including potential differences in access to higher-level positions. White leaders remain overrepresented in management positions in the United States, as they comprise 60.1% of the US population but occupy 82.2% of leadership positions (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2022, U.S. Census Bureau 2022). By contrast, although Asian and Black Americans collectively represented approximately 19.3% of the US population in 2021 (5.9% Asian, 13.4% Black, 18.5% Hispanic), they only occupied approximately 15.1% of managerial roles in US-based organizations (6.5% Asian, 8.6% Black) (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2022, U.S. Census Bureau 2022). Delving deeper into these numbers, there are important differences among racial minority groups. Specifically, Asians appear to be well-represented, if not slightly overrepresented in leadership positions, given that they represent 5.9% of the US population but 6.5% of managerial positions. However, Black people appear to be considerably underrepresented in leadership roles, comprising 13.4% of the US population but occupying only 8.6% of managerial positions.

One potential explanation for White leaders' overrepresentation in leadership positions may be that evaluators (e.g., recruiters, hiring managers, boards of directors) have an implicit preference for White leaders. In support of this explanation, DiTomaso et al. (2007, p. 196) found that "U.S.-born white men, members of the normative ingroup, receive greater access to task-oriented work experiences that improve their performance." Around the same time, a sample of 195 managers in the hospitality industry demonstrated that attribute scores for both White and Asian managers more closely resembled "successful managers" across 84 attributes ( $ICCs = 0.53$  and  $0.56$ , respectively) relative to scores for Black and Hispanic managers ( $ICCs = 0.24$  and  $0.13$ , respectively) (Chung-Herrera & Lankau 2005). Going a step further, Rosette et al. (2008) conducted four experimental studies to demonstrate that "being White" is perceived as an attribute of the business leader prototype, or mental model of who is thought to be leader-like. Gündemir et al. (2014) also conducted a series of studies to test the hypothesis that people are more likely to associate White people rather than racial minorities with leadership roles. The researchers conducted an



implicit association test that demonstrated that both White and racial minority participants reacted significantly faster when ethnically White names (compared to ethnic minority names) were paired with leadership words ( $M = 0.24$ ,  $SD = 0.48$ ,  $d = 0.50$ ).

Other researchers have noted that the impact of leader race may depend on the context of the leader role, including the occupation of the leader role and whether the organization is experiencing a crisis. For example, across several experimental studies, Sy et al. (2010) showed that Asian leaders were evaluated higher than White leaders when they occupied a stereotype-consistent leadership role (e.g., engineering), but lower than White leaders when they occupied a stereotype-inconsistent leadership role (e.g., sales). Additionally, Gündemir et al. (2019) showed across four studies (an archival study of 4,951 CEOs across five decades and three online vignette experiments) that Asian American leaders are more likely to be preferred during periods of organizational decline rather than prosperity. Similarly, work involving an archival dataset of CEO transitions in Fortune 500 companies (Cook & Glass 2014) indicated that organizations are more likely to appoint racial minority leaders, including Black leaders, during periods of organizational decline ( $b_{\text{Return on equity}} = -0.29$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ; i.e., glass cliff effect). Furthermore, the researchers showed that organizations also were more likely to appoint White leaders to replace racial minority predecessors who were unable to turn the organization around (i.e., White savior effect; Cook & Glass 2014).

Finally, James (2000) recruited Black and White managers in a Fortune 500 financial services company to study racial disparities in promotion rates into leadership roles. Testing two competing explanations for prospective racial disparity (i.e., racial discrimination and racial differences in social capital), she observed that although Black employees reported having less social capital ( $t = -15.42$  for racial similarity and  $-2.97$  for tie strength), social capital was not related to promotion rates in leadership roles ( $b = 0.04$ , NS for both forms). However, race was directly associated with promotion rates ( $b = 0.26$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ; a finding later replicated by Yap & Konrad 2009 but not Castilla 2012), providing some evidence that racial discrimination, not a lack of social capital, accounted for Black employees being less likely to be promoted than their White counterparts.

Taken together, these findings provide evidence that racial disparity in leader selection and evaluation outcomes, at least partially, can be explained by people's preference for White leaders. Yet, some research suggests that associations of Whiteness with leader prototypes could be fading. Ubaka et al. (2022) recently replicated Rosette et al.'s (2008) research on race and leader prototypicality. Unexpectedly, the researchers did not replicate the prior findings and, thus, did not find support for the prediction that White leaders are viewed as more prototypical leaders. The researchers suggest that recent trends related to the increasing representation of racial minority leaders as well as notable exemplars, like former US President Barack Obama, could be reshaping who people imagine as leaders. That said, Petsko & Rosette (2022) recently responded to this research with three preregistered studies demonstrating that "although respondents refrain from freely expressing associations they may harbor between leaders and Whiteness, these associations do not appear to have dissipated with time" (p. 1).

## Synopsis

Our review of the research on racial disparities in outcomes paints a pretty clear picture that is consistent with those perceptions. Racioethnic minorities are less likely than members of the White majority to be hired when applying for jobs. When racial minorities are hired, they are assigned less favorable positions, receive lower evaluations, are compensated less, and are less likely to ascend to leadership roles. Moreover, by employing experimental designs (mostly audit studies)



or statistically accounting for variance in human capital or objective performance, many of these studies show that observed racial differences reflect both inequality and inequity, as they are unwarranted. Although racial group coverage has been unbalanced, the existing inquiry suggests the patterns of distributive injustice largely extend across minority groups.

The effect sizes reviewed here are generally modest in magnitude (mostly small to medium) but tend to grow over the course of an employee life cycle, as disparities compound. This is intuitive given that wage growth is proportional and initial differences in placement and starting salary are expanded by disparities in appraisals, assignments, and promotions. It is also noteworthy that disparities in outcomes (accounting for performance) appear somewhat larger than racial differences in distributive justice perceptions ( $r_{\text{mean}} = 0.04$ ; Cohen-Charash & Spector 2001), which could be a function of information asymmetry (i.e., employees may not know coworker outcome allocations to recognize inequities). There is also no evidence that this pattern of racial disparity is declining, as the effect sizes in recent years are highly comparable to those observed two decades ago. In fact, just subsequent to the meta-analysis discussed above, Schminke et al. (2002) surveyed employees across 35 organizations and various industries and reported that White (compared to racioethnic minority) employees perceived greater distributive justice in their organizations ( $r = 0.22, p < 0.01$ ).

## RACE AND PROCEDURAL JUSTICE

Procedural justice involves assessments of fairness related to the decision-making process in organizations (Colquitt et al. 2001). Compared to distributive and interactional justice, in many cases, procedural justice has a relatively more substantial relationship to essential outcomes like trust in one's supervisor, affective commitment, work performance, perceived organizational support, and intentions to recommend the organization to others (Cohen-Charash & Spector 2001; Colquitt et al. 2001, 2013). Over the past three decades, procedural justice has remained integral to the quality of employees' social exchange relationships with their employers (Eisenberger et al. 2019). As such, it is essential to understand what the literature tells us about racial differences in organizational processes and the implementation thereof. Our review of this literature focuses on organizational policies, performance management, and administrative inconsistencies.

### Organizational Policies

In the context of selection, scholars have considered racial differences in the perceived fairness of different assessment tools. For instance, Schmitt et al. (2004) analyzed data from 653 college students to determine the extent to which biodata, situational judgment tests, and standardized tests were considered fair. They found no racial differences for the former two, but observed significant Black-White ( $d = 0.61$ ) and Hispanic-White differences ( $d = 0.59$ ) for standardized tests, such that White applicants believed them to be fairer than Black or Hispanic applicants. Despite these findings, meta-analytic results comparing ethnic background differences found no differences in job applicant perceptions of procedural justice between applicants from racial minority groups versus those from racial majority groups ( $k = 5; r = 0.04, 95\% CI = -0.02, 0.10$ ) (Hausknecht et al. 2004).

In more macrolevel research, Dobbin et al. (2015) used 30 years of multisource panel data to estimate the impact of several firm-level HR practices on managerial racial representation among 816 organizations. Targeted recruitment efforts related positively to the log odds of Black, Asian, and Hispanic managers, as did having a diversity manager. Moreover, having a diversity manager moderated the effects of control reforms designed to enhance procedural fairness. Specifically,

when diversity managers were present, having formal grievance procedures (an element of procedural justice) related positively to the proportions of Black men, Asian men, and Hispanic women. Diversity managers also facilitated positive effects of transparency initiatives such as job postings and job ladders on racioethnic minority representation. The authors concluded that “accountability to diversity managers or federal regulators, moreover, leads managers to be more attentive to the effects of reforms, rendering discretion-control and transparency reforms more effective” (Dobbin et al. 2015, p. 1034). Similarly, Kalev (2014) reported that whereas downsizing tended to increase the representation of White employees and decrease that of racioethnic minorities, the opposite occurred when layoffs were based on performance appraisals or overseen by the firm’s legal department.

Consistent with these findings is Hirsh & Lyons’ (2010) exploration of perceived racial discrimination with survey data from 830 linked household-employer records. Using logistic regression models predicting perceptions of racial discrimination during the last year of employment, they found that Hispanic ( $OR = 5.47$ ) and Black ( $OR = 9.97$ ) respondents were considerably more likely to perceive discrimination on the job than White respondents. Yet, perceptions of discrimination were reduced when formal recruitment, hiring, and other seemingly procedurally just personnel practices were implemented. For example, using a written application reduced the likelihood of workers perceiving racial discrimination and decreased the odds of workers reporting discrimination by 69%.

Thus, (a) oversight appears helpful in reducing racial disparities in procedural justice, and (b) procedures aimed at enhancing racial equity require oversight to be impactful and can even backfire in the absence of formal monitoring. Moreover, formalization of policies can help to diminish racial differences in procedural justice.

### **Performance Management**

As human resource management systems entail myriad processes, there are also numerous points for procedural injustice to infiltrate organizations. Homing in on the performance management process (PMP) specifically, Castilla (2012) launched a comprehensive investigation of how and where organizational practices related to PMP may have adverse implications for minority employees. Using employee data from a large private employer in the service sector, he examined three distinct stages of the PMP: (a) salary-setting processes (examining if equally performing employees earn similar pay), (b) the performance evaluation process (examining the main predictors of employee performance evaluations), and (c) career-setting processes (examining if equally performing employees are equally likely to be promoted, transferred, or terminated). He analyzed a longitudinal database for all support staff between 1996 and 2003 that contained job history and performance evaluations for 8,898 exempt and nonexempt nonexecutive and nonmanagement employees. All models controlled for tenure, part-time status, education, job title, unit, and supervisor.

Although several of Castilla’s (2012) findings pertain to distributive justice (differences in outcomes), we revisit them here with an emphasis on understanding the processes used to determine these outcomes. After controlling for important human capital characteristics, the data showed no evidence of significant differences in starting salary based on race (Black:  $b = -0.01$ , NS; Asian American:  $b = -0.02$ , NS; Hispanic:  $b = -0.02$ , NS; US-born White men were the reference group), suggesting that the process of setting starting salaries was procedurally fair. However, there was some evidence of racial differences during the performance evaluation stage. Specifically, the expected performance rating (in log odds) was 0.74 points lower for Black employees than for White employees ( $p < 0.01$ ), but the relationship between race and performance ratings was not

significant for other minority employees (Asian American:  $b = -0.09$ , NS; Hispanic:  $b = 0.08$ , NS). Although the researcher could not control for objective productivity, evidence that Black employees received ratings 52% lower than White employees suggests there may be significant subjective evaluation biases disfavoring Black employees. Demographic features were not significant predictors of variation in bonus decisions (Black:  $b = 0.01$ , NS; Asian American:  $b = -0.02$ , NS; Hispanic:  $b = -0.12$ , NS; US-born White men were the reference group), suggesting fairness in the bonus allocation process. However, the positive effect of performance ratings on pay increases was also lower for Black employees (coefficients are significant at least at  $p < 0.05$ ). Asian American employees did not experience significantly different salary growth than White male employees ( $b = -0.01$ ). Taken together, these results suggest that the process of awarding salary increases based on performance evaluations was fundamentally different for White employees compared to Black employees.

Following up on the findings of Castilla (2012), Castilla (2015) employed a nonrandom field study to examine whether accountability and transparency in pay decisions (two factors tied to procedural justice) could reduce racial differences in pay in the same organization. As noted above in the distributive justice section, whereas both Black and Hispanic employees received pay raises 0.5% lower than equally performing White employees ( $p < 0.01$ ) prior to the intervention (in the 1996–2003 data), those differences were no longer significant after the intervention (2005–2009 data; Black:  $b = 0.00$ , NS; Hispanic:  $b = 0.00$ , NS). Before 2004, the positive effect of ratings on pay growth was lower for Black employees. For Black employees rated as “needing improvement,” the pay raise was 3.1% lower than equally performing White employees ( $b = -0.03$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Pay growth was 1.3% lower for Black employees rated as “reliable” ( $b = -0.01$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and 2% lower among Black employees rated as “outstanding” ( $b = -0.02$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Importantly, this pattern of results was not significant after the intervention, illustrating the vitality of procedural justice to achieve more equitable outcomes.

In sum, it appears that performance management programs can accentuate or attenuate racial differences in procedural justice. Those that facilitate transparency and accountability stand to make differences smaller, whereas those that operate in relative secrecy provide opportunities for biases to infiltrate HR processes.

### **Administrative Inconsistency**

Numerous other inconsistencies in the administration of organizational human resource management procedures have been identified. One such inconsistency involves voice, a facet of procedural justice that refers to the opportunity to have one’s views considered by decision-makers (Colquitt et al. 2001). Few studies have tested for racial differences in voice; however, the limited evidence indicated race is correlated with voice recognition ( $r = 0.09$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) such that White employees had their input acknowledged and incorporated more than racioethnic minorities (Howell et al. 2015). Moreover, these authors found that the relationship between voice expression and voice recognition (by the supervisor) was significantly stronger for White than for minority employees (Howell et al. 2015), so differences in recognition were not due (at least not exclusively) to minorities being less inclined to provide their perspectives.

Another potential form of systemic inconsistency involves differential returns wherein members of one group receive greater rewards for in-role behavior and human capital investments. For instance, having held central positions (e.g., coordinator roles) on a college football coaching staff helped one get promoted to head coach (which is seemingly sound HR practice), but this relationship was significantly stronger for White than for Black coaches (Day 2015). In fact, having this experience on their resume only put prospective Black coaches on par with White candidates

without this experience. Likewise, securing a job offer from another employer boosted the salary of White but not minority job changers ( $d = -0.15$  in Dreher & Cox 2000 and Dreher et al. 2011). Even completing job training yielded higher payoffs in financial compensation and authority attainment for White than for Black employees (James 2000). The results of one recent national audit study (Gaddis 2015, p. 1451) are particularly illustrative of racial differential returns in HR processes:

Although a credential from an elite university results in more employer responses for all candidates, black candidates from elite universities only do as well as white candidates from less selective universities. Moreover, race results in a double penalty: When employers respond to black candidates, it is for jobs with lower starting salaries and lower prestige than those of white peers.

The flipside of differential returns is differential penalization. HR systems tend to reward desirable and sanction undesirable behaviors. Procedurally just systems do so consistently for all employees. However, evidence indicates that when service employees do not exaggerate positive emotional displays, Black employees receive lower performance appraisals than their White counterparts (Study 1:  $d = -0.91$ , 95%  $CI = -1.47$  to  $-0.36$ ; Grandey et al. 2019). Similarly, although all employees are expected to be on time for work, lateness is more detrimental to perceived promotion material for Black than for White employees (Study 1:  $b = -0.24$  versus  $0.05$ , Study 2:  $b = -0.44$  versus  $0.16$ ; Luksyte et al. 2013) and only significant for the former. A recent examination of behavioral records for more than 13,000 law enforcement officers in Chicago and Philadelphia revealed that, despite having indistinguishable levels of alleged misconduct, Black officers were twice as likely as White officers to be formally disciplined (Walter et al. 2021). Even layoffs show evidence of differential penalization, as a broader range of factors relate to layoffs of Black relative to White employees (Wilson 2005).

In sum, administrative inconsistencies can facilitate racial differences in procedural justice. Given similar employee inputs, HR processes should yield similar outcomes irrespective of employee race. Evidence suggests, however, such equity is not always present.

## Synopsis

Two prominent themes emerged in these investigations of racial differences in organizational processes and the implementation thereof. First, the evidence appears fairly robust regarding group differences in general procedural justice perceptions. Older meta-analytic evidence indicated racial differences in perceptions of procedural justice within organizations ( $r = -0.10$ ) (Cohen-Charash & Spector 2001). Moreover, Chordiya (2021) recently examined racial differences in justice among US government employees using the annual Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey from 2006 to 2017. The sample included more than 3 million observations, and the results indicated significantly higher procedural justice ratings among White than racioethnic minority employees (average item  $d = 0.17$ ). Analyses involving only 2017 indicate that the average racial difference in perceived procedural justice was 0.15 (Toole 2020), suggesting that any trend toward decline is likely minimal.

A second critical theme of the research reviewed above is that bias may permeate various points of the HR process and enable the distributive differences that we observe in organizational outcomes. Consistent with the perspective of Avery (2011), Castilla (2012, 2015), and Hirsh & Lyons (2010), it appears that wherever there is more subjectivity in organizational decision-making and less oversight, there is also more opportunity for racial bias. Fortunately, increasing structure, accountability, and transparency in formal processes help to level the playing field. This brings us to interactional justice.

## RACE AND INTERACTIONAL JUSTICE

The literature contains several studies providing both direct and indirect tests of racial differences in interactional justice, which involves the fairness of treatment (interpersonal justice) and communication received from (informational justice) organizational decision-makers. In the context of direct examinations, Toole (2020) recently employed the 2017 Employee Federal Viewpoint survey to conduct one of the largest scale assessments ( $N = 395,855$ ) of racioethnic differences in interactional justice perceptions. This examination concluded that there were significant differences in both forms. Specifically, minorities reported slightly greater informational justice ( $d = 0.02$ ), and minorities reported significantly less interpersonal justice than their White counterparts ( $d = -0.11$ ).

Numerous smaller-scale studies also directly assess racioethnic differences in interactional justice. For instance, a recent study (Jun & Wu 2021) examining the racialized impact of the COVID-19 pandemic used a mechanical Turk survey of 362 participants and found that Asian American employees reported lower levels of interpersonal justice than their non-Asian counterparts ( $r = -0.22, p < 0.01$ ). Data from nearly 2,000 hotel personnel (Simons et al. 2007) indicated statistically significant Black-White differences in interpersonal justice ( $r = -0.06, p < 0.05$ ) favoring White respondents. In examining the effects of leader interpersonal justice on perceived supervisor fairness, the criterion exhibited several significant racioethnic differences (Zapata et al. 2016). Namely, employee racioethnicity influenced perceptions of supervisor fairness, with Black ( $b = -0.22, p < 0.01$ ), Asian ( $b = -0.18, p < 0.01$ ), and Hispanic ( $b = -0.15, p < 0.05$ ) employees reporting significantly lower levels than White employees. In another inquiry, minorities reported significantly less fair treatment ( $b = -0.11, p < 0.001$ ; Lind et al. 2000), lower interpersonal justice ( $r = -0.17, p < 0.01$ ), less trust in their supervisor ( $r = -0.11, p < 0.01$ ), and more abusive supervision ( $r = 0.27, p < 0.01$ ; Vogel et al. 2015) than White employees. Nevertheless, the correlation between race and interactional justice was not significant in other studies (Aquino et al. 2004, Carter et al. 2014).

Turning to the indirect tests, scholars have tested for the presence of racioethnic differences in forms of mistreatment that have clear associations with interactional justice. For instance, measures of interpersonal justice commonly refer to treating employees politely, respectfully, and with dignity. In contrast, constructs such as bullying, harassment, and ostracism represent the literal antithesis of these dimensions. Although these measures could capture mistreatment stemming from sources other than organizational decision-makers (e.g., coworkers), prior work shows there to be considerable overlap between employee perceptions of coworker discrimination, supervisor discrimination, and organizational discrimination ( $r_{\text{mean}} = 0.45$ ) (Ensher et al. 2001). Thus, any racioethnic differences in these forms of mistreatment likely would be reflected in interactional justice perceptions as well.

### Bullying, General Discrimination, and Harassment

Workplace bullying is repeated mistreatment that is harmful to the health of the targeted employee. Fox & Stallworth (2005) surveyed 265 racioethnically diverse employees about their experiences with bullying, both general and specifically focused on the target's racioethnicity. They found little difference in the rates of general bullying reported across the various groups. Nearly everyone indicated having been on the receiving end of this type of mistreatment. However, Asian (57%), Black (50%), and Hispanic Americans (37%) all were significantly more likely to report having been targeted because of their race than White employees (13%). When the bullies were identified, this pattern was slightly less pronounced, but differences were still largely significant when the perpetrator was a supervisor compared to a coworker. More recently, data from the

nationally representative 2010 US Health and Retirement Study indicated that, although overall bullying rates were low, the rate among Black respondents was 1.5 times higher than that among White respondents (Attell et al. 2017). In line with this finding, supervisor bullying increases as a function of the percentage of racioethnic minorities in the workgroup (Roscigno et al. 2009).

Looking at more general reports of discrimination, nationally representative data led Avery et al. (2008, p. 241) to conclude that “perceived race/ethnicity-based discrimination was more prevalent among Black ( $B = 1.39, p < 0.01, OR = 4.01$ ) and Hispanic ( $B = 1.24, p < 0.01, OR = 3.45$ ) than White employees, with Black employees being just more than 4 times as likely and Hispanics being more than 3 times as likely to perceive race/ethnicity-based discrimination.” Racioethnic minorities reported significantly more ethnic harassment than their White counterparts ( $r = 0.19, p < 0.05$ ) in another study (Raver & Nishii 2010), although there was no difference in the amount of gender harassment reported ( $r = -0.08, NS$ ). Likewise, Black employees indicate being targets of racial slurs more often than White employees (Study 1:  $b = -1.40, p < 0.001$ ; Rosette et al. 2013) and reported receiving less psychosocial support than their White counterparts (James 2000). Importantly, this latter finding was only partially mediated by social capital, leading James to conclude that “we can infer that blacks experience treatment discrimination that is reflected in the nature and utility of their workplace relationships” (p. 503).

In a survey study of more than 200 employees from five organizations, racioethnic minority employees reported significantly more ethnic harassment ( $b = 1.13, p < 0.01$ ) and marginally more sexual harassment ( $b = 0.57, p < 0.10$ ) than White employees (Berdahl & Moore 2006). Importantly, this study also applied an intersectional approach by simultaneously examining the impact of racioethnicity and sex on perceived mistreatment. Their results supported the additive model of double jeopardy in that minority women reported the most mistreatment because they were targeted for sexual harassment based on being women and racioethnic harassment due to being racioethnic minorities. Similarly, Bergman et al. (2012) used data collected from roughly 5,000 active-duty military service members to examine several antecedents and consequences of harassment. Germane to this review, they found that racioethnic harassment was highest for Black personnel ( $M = 0.54, SD = 2.17$ ), followed by Hispanic ( $M = 0.15, SD = 1.87$ ), Native American ( $M = 0.04, SD = 1.78$ ), Asian ( $M = -0.21, SD = 1.49$ ), and White ( $M = -0.51, SD = 1.13$ ) personnel. Each minority group differed significantly from the White majority except for Asian American employees, a finding replicated in other military research (majority–minority  $d = 0.24$ ; Foyne et al. 2013). There were also significant Black–White and Native American–White differences in opportunity satisfaction, which captured employee satisfaction with pay, opportunities for promotion, job security, and perceptions of policies and procedures related to promotions, performance appraisal, and job assignments. They also found that policies and leadership were the strongest predictors of racioethnic harassment and were significantly stronger predictors for minorities than White personnel. As Bergman et al. (2012) concluded, “these results indicate that it is incumbent upon organizational leaders to take visible stands on this issue, to craft strong policies against prejudiced acts, and to punish offenders” (p. 75).

In sum, the literature on bullying, general discrimination, and harassment provides fairly consistent evidence of racial differences in perceived mistreatment. Encouragingly, it appears that such differences are far from inevitable and can be diminished through effective leadership and human resource management practice.

## Incivility

In addition to these more extreme forms of mistreatment, scholars have examined racioethnic differences in more subtle forms as well. For instance, in their second study of a multi-study assessment of workplace incivility experiences Cortina et al. (2013, p. 1590) indicated that “minority



members' average exposure to incivility was significantly higher ( $M = 27.86, SD = 9.26$ ) than that of their White colleagues ( $M = 25.87, SD = 8.40$ )" ( $d = 0.23$ ; the first focused exclusively on gender differences). Moreover, the third study produced evidence of double jeopardy, wherein women of color are doubly disadvantaged by their racioethnicity and sex, in that minority women reported the highest rates of incivility. More recently, a meta-analytic investigation of the causes and consequences of incivility (Yao et al. 2022) revealed that White employees experience significantly less incivility than their minority counterparts ( $k = 6, N = 17,315, \rho = -0.04, 95\% CI = -0.07$  to  $-0.01$ ).

Finally, a meta-analytic review of this literature reached a fairly concrete conclusion about racioethnic differences in perceived workplace mistreatment (McCord et al. 2018). Namely, racial minorities reported higher levels than their White counterparts overall ( $d = 0.13, 95\% CI = 0.08$  to  $0.19$ ), and this pattern was consistently significant across four of the eight outcomes examined (discrimination, harassment, bullying, and incivility). Notably, only one form was reported significantly more among the White majority (interpersonal conflict). They also observed some significant moderators of these racioethnic differences. For instance, majority-minority differences were more than six times more pronounced for mistreatment specific to one's racioethnic identity ( $d = 0.66, 95\% CI = 0.48$  to  $0.94$ ) compared to general mistreatment ( $d = 0.09, 95\% CI = 0.05$  to  $0.14$ ). Another important difference is that "intensity scales exhibited stronger race differences than frequency or yes/no scales" (McCord et al. 2018, p. 146), indicating greater racial discrepancies in perceived severity (i.e., how bad it was) than there was in perceived prevalence (i.e., how often it happens). On a more encouraging note, the size of these differences was inversely related to the date of publication, indicating that racioethnic differences tended to decrease over the time of the sample (mid-1980s to roughly 2015).

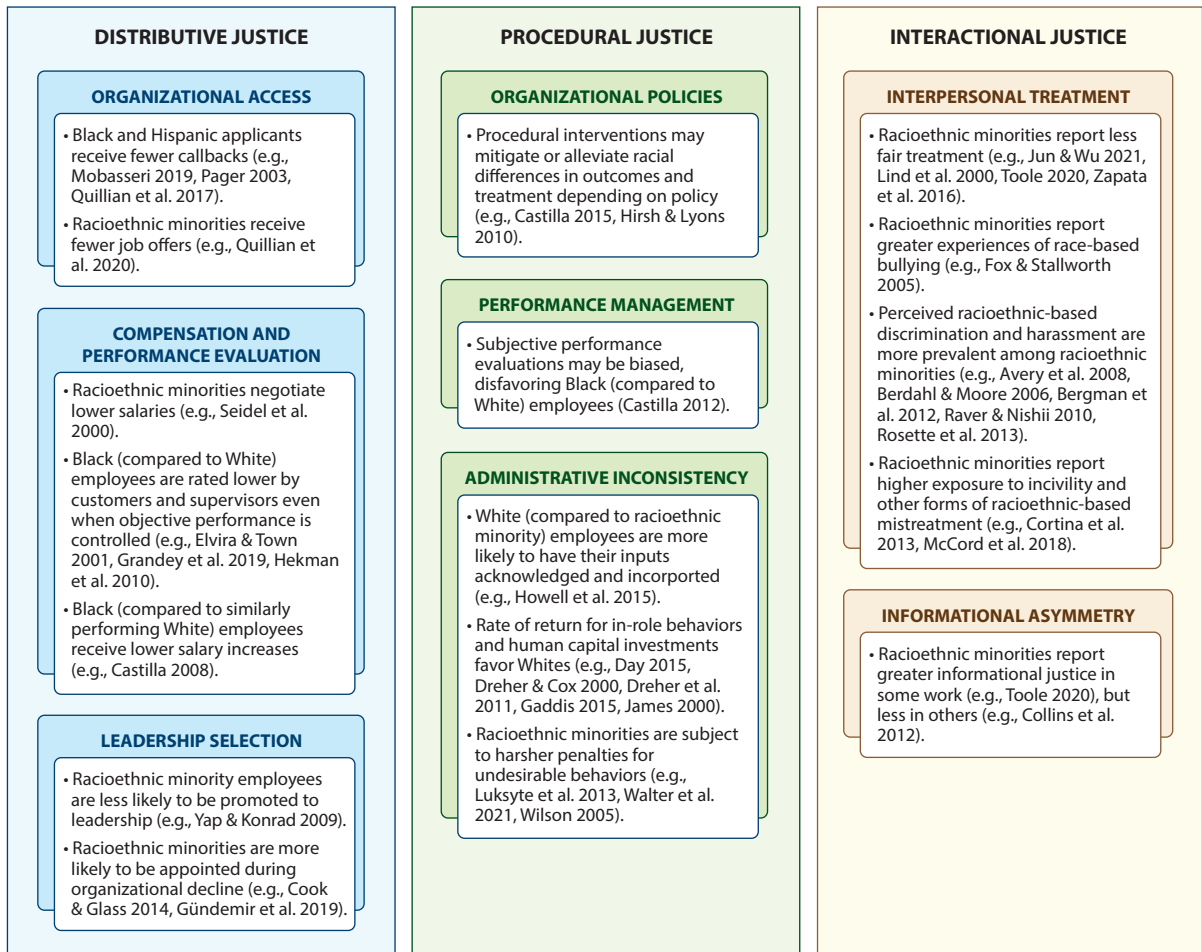
## Synopsis

In sum, there are relatively small but often significant racioethnic differences in perceptions of interactional justice and perceived interpersonal mistreatment in organizational settings. The overwhelming majority of these indicate poorer treatment for racioethnic minorities relative to White employees. Notably, this difference appears highly consistent across both measures focused specifically on interpersonal justice and those focused on general forms of mistreatment (although both of these differences appear smaller than those related to identity-specific mistreatment). Although most effects were modest in size, it is important to view this in the context of recent work by Hardy et al. (2022, p. 657), showing that "even seemingly trivial amounts of subgroup bias can produce practically significant rates of hiring discrimination and productivity loss." Moreover, it may be tempting to dismiss or downplay these findings because they involve self-reports and may be subject to some form of perceptual distortion. Nevertheless, despite Black applicants in one study holding lower expectations of selection test distributive justice than White applicants, racioethnicity had no effect on reported justice perceptions of any form after applicants actually completed the selection test (Bell et al. 2006). Thus, justice perceptions were statistically invariant across racioethnic groups after everyone was exposed to an identical stimulus. This suggests that racioethnic differences in self-reported justice likely reflect differences in treatment and experiences.

## CONCLUSIONS

Despite the presence of relatively few direct tests of racial differences in organizational justice, the literature is pretty consistent in showing that such differences exist. Whether the focus is on outcomes, procedures, or treatment, race seems to matter (see **Figure 1** for an illustrative





**Figure 1**

An illustrative summary of demonstrated racial differences in distributive, procedural, and interactional justice from 2000 to 2021.

summary). Most often, the observed racial disparities favor White employees while disfavoring everyone else (with some exceptions for personnel of Asian descent). Although direct comparisons with prior reviews (e.g., Cox et al. 2001) are difficult due to our focus on justice and relatively greater emphasis on effect sizes, the patterns are largely consistent with their conclusions. In the remaining sections, we explore the implications of these findings for practitioners and scholars.

### Implications for Practice

Some readers may be inclined to rationalize the differences reported here, as system justification is often used to make sense of inequality. In doing so, these individuals may even point to meta-analytic evidence of racial differences in cognitive ability and job performance favoring the racial majority (e.g., McKay & McDaniel 2006) as a potential explanation. We caution against such rationalizing for several reasons. First, equality in processes (procedural justice) and treatment (interactional justice) should be universal standards immune to arguments of meritocracy. Simply put, no individual or group is more or less deserving of factors such as the consistent administration of

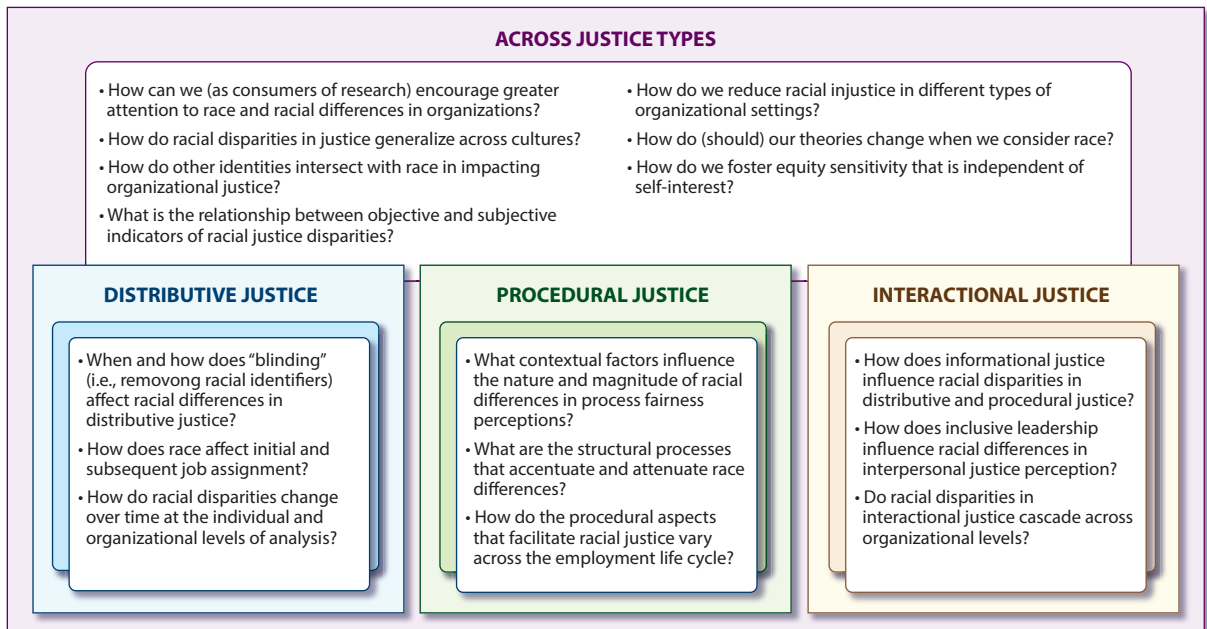
unbiased procedures, comprehensive explanation of decision-making, and common courtesy and respect. Second, none of the studies reviewed here detected differences in outcomes that could be explained by human capital or objective performance when these variables were available and controlled. Thus, these differences are not merely a function of race coinciding with differences in knowledge, skills, abilities, or performance. Third, such rationalizing helps perpetuate racial inequity by creating or reinforcing stereotypical associations between race, ability, and performance. In essence, rationalizations for present disparities stand to legitimize future efforts to sustain the racially unjust status quo, resulting in inequity becoming systemically embedded and difficult to unravel (Amis et al. 2020).

Although very few studies tested for racial differences across the forms of justice within a single sample, a notable exception allows for some interesting conclusions given its scope and sample (Toole 2020). Containing a nationally representative sample of roughly 400,000 government employees spanning various organizations and types of work, the data indicated significant racial differences for procedural ( $d = -0.15$ , 95%  $CI = -0.16$  to  $-0.14$ ) and interpersonal justice ( $d = -0.11$ , 95%  $CI = -0.12$  to  $-0.11$ ) favoring the majority, a smaller, but still significant difference in informational justice favoring minorities ( $d = 0.02$ , 95%  $CI = 0.01$  to  $0.03$ ), and an NS difference for distributive justice ( $d = 0.00$ , 95%  $CI = -0.01$  to  $0.01$ ). Although prior meta-analytic evidence found significant relationships for race with both procedural and distributive justice, the pattern was similar in that the former was larger than the latter (weighted  $r_{\text{mean}} = -0.10$  versus  $-0.04$ ; Cohen-Charash & Spector 2001). Because casual models tend to involve the independent variable exerting a larger effect on the mediator(s) than on the outcome, one interpretation could be that racial differences in distributive justice have operated indirectly through interactional (with informational differences slightly offsetting those in interpersonal treatment) and procedural justice. This is further supported by distributive justice correlating significantly with each of the other types ( $r_{\text{mean}} = 0.54$ ). Conclusions about such a causal sequence are admittedly speculative and require direct empirical assessment. However, this pattern of results suggests organizational efforts to enhance racial equity might be best served by focusing on standardizing their processes (to enhance consistency and minimize bias) and promoting norms of universal civility and respect. It also converges with results showing that demographic differences in outcomes are attenuated when processes emphasize procedural fairness (Castilla 2015, Fang & Heywood 2006).

One means toward this end could involve prioritizing the organization's diversity climate, the extent to which equal opportunity is provided and all personnel are included. Prior evidence indicates hospitable diversity climates (*a*) correspond to less perceived discrimination and (*b*) attenuate racial differences in organizational commitment, turnover intentions, absenteeism, and objective performance (see McKay & Avery 2015 for a review). Such organizational environments likely coincide with smaller racial differences in justice as well. Alternatively, readers could consult a recent extensive review on diversity practice efficacy that includes a number focused specifically on race (Nishii et al. 2018). For instance, evidence from Castilla (2015) supports the efficacy of accountability and transparency in fostering more equitable workplaces. Several well-known companies like Google, Microsoft, and Nike have established public-facing racial equity goals that tie specific metrics and timelines to which employees, potential employees, customers, and beyond can hold them accountable. We now focus on what our findings suggest for future inquiry.

## Implications for Research

The synthesis of findings also provides additional avenues for future research. Next, we highlight some primary areas of emphasis. See **Figure 2** for additional exploration into future research questions.



**Figure 2**

Examples of potential research questions to help guide future inquiry on the impact of race on the various forms of organizational justice.

**Greater diversity.** A rather significant limitation of the research reviewed here is its overwhelming reliance on US samples. However, the underrepresentation of race research in other national contexts should not be interpreted to indicate that the United States has a monopoly on racial disparities. For instance, in their recent audit study, Di Stasio & Larsen (2020) submitted more than 19,000 applications to test for the presence of racial and ethnic hiring discrimination in five European countries. They found that the least likely to receive a callback compared to White ethnic majority applicants were Black and Middle Eastern/North African/Pakistani applicants ( $OR = 0.52$ ), followed by Asian applicants ( $OR = 0.71$ ) and White ethnic minority applicants ( $OR = 0.83$ ). This led to the conclusion that “across occupations, members of racial or ethnic minorities face substantial discrimination, and race trumps gender as the target of discriminatory behavior by employer” (Di Stasio & Larsen 2020, p. 243). Accordingly, whereas research samples have been relatively confined to the United States (likely due to its higher racioethnic diversity than most other developed economies), the results may generalize to other countries nonetheless. We implore scholars to continue investigating how the workplace impact of race may vary across national contexts.

A potential impediment to cross-cultural research on race is the inconsistent conceptualization across national contexts. Geneticists have long concluded that race is not a genetic construct, but a social one. In the United States, most research follows the census bureau categorization scheme involving White, Black, Asian, Native American, and Pacific Islander as racial categories. One ethnic distinction (Hispanic or Latino) also typically garners consideration. The most considerable challenge is usually determining the appropriate classification of individuals with multiracial ancestry (the most common solution is to rely on self-categorization). Outside the United States (and other countries that also rely on the census bureau classification scheme like the United

Kingdom), however, race often takes on different meanings that may involve ethnic origin, caste, skin color, nationality, or even religion. This makes cross-cultural comparison different because the race construct lacks measurement equivalence.

Despite this difficulty, research on race remains critical and there is a clear need for greater attention on racial groups beyond Black and White people. In doing so, we encourage scholars to consider taking intersectional approaches, looking at how racial disparities may vary as a function of other identities, such as gender, sexual orientation, or social class. For instance, Rosette et al. (2018) provide a recent comprehensive review of intersectional work on gender and race, showing various ways that experiences of racioethnic minority males and female employees converge and diverge. Moreover, racial disparities could be amplified or attenuated by social class, sexual orientation, nativity, and a range of other social categorizations.

**Specific points of emphasis.** Some clear voids need filling. Perhaps most notable is the relative dearth of literature linking race to informational justice. Some research in the job search context suggests that racioethnic differences in informational justice could help to account for any corresponding differences in outcome attainment. For instance, McDonald et al. (2009, p. 397) noted that “few have empirically examined the gender/racial distribution of job information” and that “results from this study provide support for the notion that white male advantage is preserved through exclusive access to job information.” Although more than a decade has passed, we echo McDonald et al.’s assertion that inquiry has yet to link racioethnicity and informational justice adequately and, therefore, encourage scholars to begin filling this potentially important gap. In an example of this type of inquiry, Milkman et al. (2015) conducted an academic audit study, sending emails to more than 6,500 professors from fictitious students ostensibly requesting opportunities to engage in research before applying to doctoral programs. They found that Black, Hispanic, and Asian students were significantly less likely than White male students to receive an email response from professors. Likewise, Collins et al. (2012) reported a significant correlation between race and informational fairness favoring White employees in one study (Study 1:  $r = -0.13$ ), although this linkage was smaller and not significant in a second (Study 2:  $r = -0.07$ ).

There is also a persistent need to identify factors that attenuate racioethnic differences in organizational justice of all types. For instance, one of the few empirical assessments of race and informational justice compared qualitative and quantitative personnel appraisal information at a large bank and concluded that “supervisors systematically gave lower ratings to Black staff relative to White staff that they did not justify in their written summaries” (Wilson 2010, p. 1925). Mandating the provision of such explanations could compel supervisors who cannot substantiate racioethnic differences in their ratings to reappraise and reduce the discrepancy. Alternatively, organizational initiatives (e.g., training) could help promote more equitable employee experiences. Given that diversity climates relate inversely to perceived racioethnic discrimination (Triana et al. 2015), might facilitating inclusivity also prove particularly prominent in reducing racioethnic differences in organizational justice?

Furthermore, as more organizations draw attention to their diversity statements, initiatives, and policies, some research suggests White employees may develop an “illusion of fairness” that renders them less sensitive to discrimination against minorities and leads them to react more negatively toward minorities who claim discrimination (e.g., Kaiser et al. 2013). However, White individuals may be genuinely motivated to pursue justice when they recognize unfair disadvantage experienced by racioethnic minorities (e.g., Banfield & Dovidio 2013). Thus, incorporating objective evidence of racial injustice within the seemingly neutral processes that govern organizational access and treatment may also be critical to fostering more generally favorable perceptions of procedural fairness for race-conscious initiatives. Future insights of additional research

following Castilla's (2012, 2015) model are vital to this effort. This work may be particularly useful among individuals who personally value diversity but may also help to enlarge that population of people within organizations. However, as reactions to disconfirming information may be short term, while establishing and maintaining racial justice requires a long-term commitment, it is essential that future research also identifies interventions that foster sustained motivation to pursue racial justice.

We would also be remiss if we did not mention the role that scholarly disinterest has played in what is known and remains unknown about racial differences in organizational settings. Scholars should do a better job of attending to race as an important variable in understanding justice perceptions in organizational research. Findings suggest that only 22% of micromanagement papers in top tier journals in the past 10 years reported race (Avery & Volpone 2020). Those that did rarely included it in analyses—or even in correlation matrices. Given its potential impact on the phenomena of interest, racial information should always be reported. Testing the generality of a paper's hypothesized relationships across racial categories could expand the authors' contribution to theory and practice while requiring few other substantive changes to the manuscript. At a minimum, including race in the correlation matrix can provide valuable information to readers about how the variables in the study vary (or do not) as a function of race. For a field with such a high emphasis on theoretical contribution, the failure to recognize race and its impact significantly limits the generalizability of any conclusions we may draw from our analyses.

Ideally, justice is colorblind; however, our review suggests its scales persistently tip to the advantage of White people and the disadvantage of racioethnic minorities at various stages of the organizational life cycle. The evidence presented here demonstrates that the products, application, and experiences of organizational justice indeed vary as a function of race, with racioethnic minorities subject to disparate outcomes, processes, and treatment. The magnitude of differences may vary across types of justice, yet apparent progress in some areas seems to be consistently undermined by inertia in others. Consistent with previous reviews (e.g., Cascio & Aguinis 2008, Cox et al. 2001, Cox & Nkomo 1990), we conclude that the study of race in the organizational sciences continues to be ripe for in-depth theoretical and empirical development.

## DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

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