Using the Science of Psychology to Target Perpetrators of Racism and Race-Based Discrimination For Intervention Efforts: Preventing Another Trayvon Martin Tragedy

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Abstract

Psychological science offers a variety of methods to both understand and intervene when acts of potential racial or ethnic racism, bias or prejudice occur. The Trayvon Martin killing is a reminder of how vulnerable African American men and boys, especially young African American men, are to becoming victims of social inequities in our society. We examine several historical events of racial bias (the Los Angeles civil disturbance after the Rodney King verdict, the federal government's launch of a "War on Drugs" and the killing of Trayvon Martin) to illustrate the ways in which behaviors of racism and race-based discrimination can be viewed from a psychological science lens in the hopes of eliminating and preventing these behaviors. If society is to help end the genocide of African American men and boys then we must broaden our focus from simply understanding instances of victimization to a larger concern with determining how policies, laws, and societal norms serve as the foundation for maintaining implicit biases that are at the root of race-based discrimination, prejudice, bias and inequity. In our call to action, we highlight the contributions that psychologists, particularly racial and ethnic minority professionals, can make to reduce the negative impact of racial and ethnic bias through their volunteer/pro bono clinical efforts.

Keywords: prejudice, discrimination, bias, African Americans, men, Rodney King, War on Drugs

Introduction

The death of 17-year-old Trayvon Martin struck a nerve in many Americans, particularly African Americans. Civil rights leaders called on Americans to ensure that the loss of young Martin's life would be the catalyst for an examination of how racial bias in current policies, laws and social norms play a role in the interracial violence against young African American men and boys in the United States. The shooting of Trayvon Martin raises a number of researchable questions about the perpetrators of the shootings of African American men and boys. What are the consequences of growing up in a society structured by police and cultural norms that implicitly support prejudice, bias, or race-based discrimination in everyday societal interactions? What are the consequences of federal policies and campaigns that create images of criminals as belonging to a particular racial/ethnic group?

Psychology has a body of science that can help the United States to understand why and how it creates a society that is damaging and lethal to the lives of African American men and boys. Psychological studies of race, racism and discrimination contribute to society's understanding of the bases and mechanisms of hierarchical differentiation (status, power, inequality, stereotyping, categorization, social stratification) that shape the ordering of Black-White social relations and the allocation of life experiences and life chances of young African American men and boys (Baron & Pfeffer, 1994; Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004; Fiske, 1992, 1993; Fiske & Berdahl, 2007; Goodwin, Gubin, Fiske, & Yzerbyt, 2000; Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004; Zuberi, 2001). Psychology also has the tools for interventions to help civil right leaders and other proponents of social justice address individual and structural race-based violence towards African American men. Further, psychology has committed psychologists who have risen to the challenge on many occasions to address and help implement psychological social justice work.

Through an examination of a series of historical case studies, this article shows how psychological science can provide insights into a social determinants framework for understanding violence against Black men that advances social justice and informs public policy.

Psychology of Racism: Early Contributions to Social Justice

In the 1940s, American Psychological Association President Dr. Kenneth Clark, and his wife, psychologist Dr. Mamie Clark, both African American psychologists, developed a test using dolls to study the psychological effects of segregation on African American children (Clark & Clark, 1947) by assessing their perceptions of race and racial preference (Clark & Clark, 1939). In the Clark and Clark study, four plastic, diaper-clad dolls, which were identical except for skin color, were shown to African American children between the ages of three and seven. Almost all of the children were able to correctly identify the race of the doll based on its skin color. Asked which doll they preferred, the majority of children selected the White doll. In a coloring exercise, the Clarks instructed children to use crayons to give outline drawings of a boy and girl their skin color; many of the children with dark complexions colored the figures white or yellow (Clark & Clark, 1950). The Clarks, based on the results of these studies, concluded that prejudice, discrimination, and segregation by Whites led African American children to develop a sense of inferiority and self-hatred.

The research caught the attention of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Legal Defense Fund, which subsequently retained Dr. Kenneth Clark to provide expert assistance and testimony in cases challenging the constitutionality of racially separate public schools. Five Defense Fund school segregation cases, including three in which Dr. Clark previously testified as an expert witness, were appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court. These cases were consolidated under the name of the case among the five that ranked highest in the alphabet, Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka Kansas. In the seminal case of Brown v. Board of Educ. (1950), the Supreme Court, in a unanimous decision, found the separate but equal doctrine to be unconstitutional and in violation of the Equal Protection and Due Process clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment. One of Dr. Kenneth Clark's papers on racial discrimination—his submission to the 1950 White House Mid-Century Conference on Children and Youth--was specifically acknowledged by the Supreme Court in Note 11 of the Brown decision. While Brown v. Board of Educ. did not end racial discrimination at the individual level, it did open the door to the enactment of policies that addressed prejudice and discrimination at a systems level (Kluger, 1977).

Nearly a quarter century later, in 1972, African American psychologists were called upon to use empirical studies on bias, racism and discrimination to minimize the effects of racism, bias and prejudice in convening a jury pool (Robinson, 1973). Members of the Association of Black Psychologists and lawyers teamed up to assist University of California Professor Angela Davis, who was accused of conspiracy in a courthouse shootout. She had been charged with aggravated kidnapping and first-degree murder of the judge who was killed in the shooting. The firearms used in the robbery that killed the trial judge and five others were purchased two days earlier by Professor Davis though she was not involved in the shootout. Davis, a leader in both the Communist and Black Panther Parties, had earned the dubious distinction of being the first African American woman on the FBI's Ten Most Wanted List. In the face of these facts, it was necessary to select jurors who would not be biased against Professor Davis because of her

race or her political activism. Her attorney capitalized on the expertise of Black psychologists to apply the science of stereotypes, bias and prejudice to jury selection. The pro-bono team from the Bay Area Association of Black Psychologists aided the eventual acquittal of Davis.

Toward a Social Determinants Framework of Racism and Prejudice: Theories of Implicit Bias

While egregious acts of racism and explicit forms of prejudice have diminished considerably over the years (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004; Schuman, Steeh, Bobo & Krysan, 1997; Sue et al., 2007), psychological science provides accumulating evidence of implicit forms of racial bias and prejudice held by Whites towards Blacks (Blair, 2001; Dovidio, Kawakami & Beach, 2001). Theories of implicit or unconscious bias contend that individuals use information derived from experience, media, culture or others to organize people into social categories according to salient traits, such as age, gender, race, ethnicity or social roles in society. Such descriptions as "a large Black man" carry meaning shaped by feelings, expectations of behaviors and schemas also influenced by experience with these social categories, the media, culture or information from others that influences how people respond (Kang, 2009). Studies of implicit bias find that stereotypes often guide the way people respond to certain descriptions or traits. For instance, people are shaped to view the "little old lady" as frail and non-threatening while "a large Black man" may invoke a response of fear and danger.

Growing numbers of psychological studies find that White Americans hold attitudes and engage in behaviors that unintentionally disadvantage or discriminate against racial and ethnic minority groups (Apfelbaum, Sommers, & Norton, 2008; Bobo & Fox, 2003; Dovido & Gaertner, 2004; Dovidio, Gaertner, Kawakami & Hodson, 2002; Sears, Sidanius, & Bobo, 2000). Theories of aversive racism (Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986), modern racism (McConahay, 1986), subtle racism (Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995) and symbolic racism (Sears, 1988) propose that acts of race discrimination are often couched in beliefs about individualism (i.e., sense of personal freedom, self-reliance, work ethic, personal achievement, fairness and egalitarianism. As an example, White police officers may be biased in their decisions about which individuals they stop and their sense of dangerousness and threat of those individuals. While this is often attributed to a schemata of dangerous characters created through experiences, these decisions may be influenced as well by unrecognized bias (Correll, Park, Judd & Wittenbrink, 2007; Correll, Park, Judd, Wittenbrink, Sadler et al., 2007; Gove, 2013; Pridell et al., 2001). The perceived motives may focus on efforts to protect and serve fairly without an awareness of how these schemata may actually arise. African American men and boys can be perceived as more dangerous, hostile and threatening than White men.

These messages of bias and evaluation can become internalized. More than fifty years after the original Clark and Clark study, researchers conducted a version of the doll experiment using cartoon characters. African American and White preschool children showed a trend toward selecting White cartoon characters as their "best friend" instead of the African American characters (Jordan & Hernandez-Reif, 2009). The enduring findings of doll studies (Banks, 1976; Byrd, 2012; Cross, 1985; Gray-Little & Halfdahl, 2000) are seen as indicative of messages in American society that devalue African Americans. These messages are transmitted early in the lives of African American children despite all of the gains of the civil rights movement, the growth of the African American middle class and the election of the first American Black

president (Veroni-Paccher, 2012). It is particularly troublesome when bias becomes interwoven into policies and procedures as we saw with limitations of educational opportunities for African Americans that were challenged in the Brown vs. Board of Education.

When Implicit Bias Becomes Policy: The War on Drugs

In 1982, President Ronald Reagan announced a "War on Drugs" (Alexander, 2012; Beckett, 1997). Only a few years later, crack cocaine use and sales spread rapidly in poor African American neighborhoods (Alexander; Reinarman & Levine, 1995). In an effort to build public support for the war on drugs, in 1985, the Reagan administration launched a media campaign designed to focus attention on the proliferation of crack cocaine in predominantly African American inner city urban neighborhoods. (Alexander; Beckett; Stutman, 1992). A multitude of stories appeared on the nightly news, newspapers and magazines about crack cocaine typically featuring African American "crack whores", "crack babies" and "gangbangers". The individuals were portrayed as civil terrorists in the United States (Alexander; Beckett; Stutman). This served to reinforce already existing stereotypes of African American women as irresponsible "welfare queens" and African American men as criminals, gangbangers and violent individuals who belonged to a criminal subculture. (Alexander; Gilliam, 1999)

Within a one year period from 1988 to 1989, the Washington Post alone published, 1,565 stories about the "drug scourge" (Alexander, 2012, p. 53; Reinarman & Levine, 1995). Most likely, the writers of these stories did not see them as arising from racial bias but rather as a simple reporting of the facts (Beckett; Mauer, 2009). In the mist of this media campaign, the enactment of increasingly punitive anti-drug legislation was prevalent (Alexander; Reinarman & Levine). The Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986, and its second version in 1988, included harsh, mandatory minimum sentences for non-violent drug offenses and authorized the death penalty for certain drug-related offenses. It set the penalty for the distribution of crack cocaine (associated with use by African Americans) at 100 times the penalty for the distribution of powder cocaine (associated with young middle class Whites), imposed new "civil penalties" to be paid by offenders, and eliminated several federal benefits, including student loans, for anyone convicted of a drug offense. (Alexander; Beckett; Brewer & Heitzeg, 2008; Travis, 2002).

The racial bias inherent since the war on drugs is why three fourths of all people imprisoned for drug offenses have been African American or Latino (Alexander, 2012; Mauer & Chesney-Lind, 2002; Mauer & King, 2004). It accounts for why African American men have been admitted to state prison on drug charges at a rate more than thirteen times higher than that of white men (Alexander; Human Rights Watch, 2000) notwithstanding that African Americans are no more likely to be found guilty of drug crimes than Whites are (Alexander; Mauer, 2009).

This bias, whether intentional or unconscious, is a major reason for the imprisonment of 1 in every 15 African American men in 2006, compared with 1 in 106 white men (Alexander; Pew Center, 2008). This also accounts for why that same year, 1 in 9 young African American men between 20 and 35 years of age and 1 in 19 African American men ages 18-19 were behind bars. Comparatively, only 1 in 107 White 18 and 19 year old men was imprisoned (Alexander; Pew Center). This result ensues even though White youth were the most likely of the three major racial and ethnic groups in America (White, African American and Hispanic or Latino) to be in possession of particular illegal drugs for use or sale (Alexander; Johnston, O'Malley,

Bachman, & Schulenberg, 2007; Snyder & Sickmund, 2006;). Racial bias is also evident in the exercise of prosecutorial and judicial discretion in the treatment of racial/ethnic minority juveniles who, as a consequence, are more likely to be "arrested, detained, formally charged, transferred to adult court, and confined to secure residential facilities than their white counterparts." (Alexander, p. 118; Hoytt, Schiraldi, Smith, & Ziedenberg, 2002; Poe-Yamagata & Jones, 2000; Pope, Lowell, & Hisa, 2002;).

Although our criminal justice system stands by its claim to be color blind, Alexander contends "it creates and maintains a racial hierarchy" (2012, p. 13) in which African Americans, whether they are physically housed in jails or not, are viewed as guilty and dangerous (Alexander; Belk, 2006; Gibran, 2011). Alexander perceives mass incarceration—the New Jim Crow, she calls it—as defining Blackness in America to mean "black people, especially black men, are criminals" (p. 199). This observation is synonymous with psychological research demonstrating that Americans conflate Blackness with crime (Boyd, 2002; Gibran).

Despite the recent retreat from the "War on Drugs," African American men face stereotyping as criminals, regardless of whether they have actually served time in the criminal justice system or are engaged in criminal activity (Alexander, 2012). High levels of education and income are not as protective for African American men as White men. Alexander concludes that law enforcement equates "young + black + male" (p. 199) with reasonable suspicion. This erroneous suspicion provides the rationale for law enforcement to detain, interrogate, search and even arrest African American men meriting such suspicion.

A Social Determinants Framework of Racism and Prejudice: The Roles of Social Status and Resource Competition

A second cluster of theories including group conflict theory (Levine & Campbell, 1972), group position (Blumer, 1958; Bobo, 1999) and racial identity development in Whites (Carter, Helms & Juby, 2004; Helm, 1990) are characterized by their focus on racism at the social structural level. The central tenet is that individuals have strong identification with their own ethnic or racial group. This identification includes a tendency to create a hierarchy in which the social status of various groups is fixed and competitive. Racism emerges from competing interests across groups. Prejudice, bias or racial discrimination occurs as a function of the desire for resources and privilege to flow to the dominant group. To support these structures, the dominant groups develop and propagate ideologies that maintain and even legitimize their higher social status (Jackman & Muha, 1984; Sears et al., 2000).

While having a strong ethnic identity is positive and beneficial to mental health, findings from various studies suggest that when Whites view other ethnic groups as in competition with them for societal resources, racially motivated violence can occur (Bobo & Hutchings, 1996; Bobo & Johnson 2000; Esses, Dovidio, Jackson & Armstrong, 2001; Green, Strolovitch, & Wong, 1998; McLaren, 2003; Pinderhughes, 1993). The Los Angeles 1992 Riot, the 1990 Red Apple boycott in Brooklyn (Kim, 2000), and other similar instances of violence have been explained using these social structural theories of racism (Morawska, 2001).

In the theories cited above, racism is seen as being mediated by the hierarchical nature of social relationships in American society, which may result in the marginalization of particular racial groups under the guise of nationalism and cultural differentiation (Howitt & Owusu-

Bemtpah, 1994). As an example from earlier years in the U.S. South, efforts to build a strong America resulted in race-segregated, inferior schools with topics of study limited for African American children (Mays, Maas, Ricks & Cochran, 2012; Morris & Monroe, 2009). Those who endowed these schools believed they were acting in the best interest of African Americans by establishing schools limited to the study of agriculture and engineering, fields with tangible skills that would lead to reliable employment. They did not perceive their actions as discriminatory nor as contributing to disadvantage (Mays et al., 2012; Morris & Monroe, 2009).

A third perspective on theories of race, racism and discrimination builds on the work of aversive racism and stereotype threat (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004; Gaertner et al. 2005; Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986). This perspective classifies the types of racial attitudes and actions by Whites (micro assaults or micro aggressions) and the internal experiences of racial or ethnic minority targets. In aversive racism, individuals go out of their way to endorse egalitarianism and take great pains to avoid acting in a biased manner (Bodenhausen & Richeson, 2010). However, Bodenhausen and Richeson remind us of Devine's (1989) argument that egalitarian beliefs and feelings of prejudice not only coexist but coexist in most members of society. Devine argues that egalitarian beliefs are assumed to operate cognitively in a very controlled manner. Individuals use and activate these cognitions intentionally and consciously.

On the other hand, Devine contends, prejudiced feelings activate spontaneously and without intention or effort which stands in contrast to the individuals' perception of themselves as not racist or prejudiced. According to Bodenhausen and Richeson, Devine's notions mean that even when an individual rejects that they are prejudiced or engaged in stereotypes, they are still subject to automatic activation of prejudice as if it is an "autonomous mental reflex" (Bodenhausen & Richeson, p. 348). This perspective also demonstrates counseling approaches to address the implicit nature of social prejudice and hostility (Helms, 1990; Mays, 1995; Sue, et al., 2007). In the case of aversive racism, it may be possible to use cognitive strategies to control automatic prejudiced feelings and reactions in favor of the controlled egalitarian processes. This is similar to the manner in which police are trained to try and react to what they actually see and not what they may imagine in their minds.

Rodney King Incident through the Lens of Psychological Theories of Racism

In 1992, South-Central Los Angeles, a community with a large Black population, erupted in violence after a jury acquitted four Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) officers on charges they assaulted Rodney King, an African American, during an arrest. Three officers were White and one was Latino. Individuals outside the African American community viewed the Rodney King civil disturbance as disproportionate to the acquittal of the Los Angeles Police Officers (Green & Heilburn, 2010; Mydans, 1992). But those reactions fail to take into account a long history of racial unrest and mistrust. Los Angeles stands unique in the number of race-related civil disturbances that it has endured. Before the 1992 riot, Los Angeles endured the 1943 Zoot Suit riots, 1968 Watts civil disturbance, the East Los Angeles Riots of 1970, and the civil disturbance after the 1991 Latosha Harlins verdict (Farrell & Johnson, 2001; Levon, 2012; Pagan, 2003; Stevenson, 2013; Zoot Suit Discovery Guide, 2012). All of these disturbances reflect an outpouring of anger in reaction to perceived racial discrimination and in some instances procedural unfairness in the punishment of perpetrators. To understand the 1992 riots, it is necessary to understand the circumstances surrounding Rodney King's arrest.

In March 1991, two California Highway Patrol (CHP) officers spotted King driving at a high rate of speed in the San Fernando Valley area of Los Angeles. They pursued King who led police on a high-speed chase through residential streets at 50 to 80 miles per hour (Independent Commission, 1991, Mydans, 1991). Rodney King, a 25-year-old unemployed construction worker, was on parole after serving six months of a two-year sentence for second-degree robbery (Mydans, Stevenson & Egan, 1992). King eventually stopped, and LAPD joined CHP at the scene.

According to Sargent Stacey Koon and Officer Laurence Powell, both of LAPD, King did not lie down after exiting his car. Instead, they said, King got down on all fours, slapped the ground and refused to lie down as ordered (Independent Commission, 1992). Koon twice fired a taser stun gun at King while he was on the ground (Independent Commission). It was at this point that George Holliday, a White resident who lived nearby, turned on his video camera and started recording the activities from the balcony of his apartment (Independent Commission). As King moved forward, Powell struck him with a baton, landing a blow to King's head and resulting in King immediately falling to the ground (Independent Commission). As Powell hit King several additional times with his baton, another officer moved in to prevent Powell from swinging (Independent Commission). Someone, reportedly Koon, yelled, "that's enough" and King rose to his knees, but Powell and another officer continued to strike (Independent Commission). Koon said he directed Powell and a second officer to hit King with "power strokes" of their batons (Independent Commission). Koon indicated that he ordered officers to "hit his joints, hit his wrists, hit his elbows, hit his knees, hit his ankles" (Independent Commission, p.7).

The tape shows that King received 56 baton blows and six kicks by the LAPD officers (Independent Commission, 1992; Mydans et al., 1992) King was handcuffed and swarmed by six LAPD officers, who hogtied him and dragged him on his stomach to the side of the road to await an ambulance (Mydans et al.). Many in the African American community believed that the videotape would convince a jury to convict the LAPD officers involved (Cannon, 1999; Mullen & Skita, 2006). Research in psychology shows that individuals are more willing to accept negative, unfavorable, or non-preferred justice-related outcomes when they are arrived at by institutional procedures that are perceived as fair and just (Greenberg, 1987; Greenberg & Folger, 1983; Tyler, 1990; van den Bos, Wilke, Lind, & Vermunt, 1998). In light of the videotape of the beating, the acquittal of the LAPD officers was seen in the context of a long history of perceived racial discrimination and injustice. Psychologists (including authors Mays and Cochran) who worked side by side with members in the African American community helping to clean up after the riot as well as providing immediate pro bono services to the diverse communities in Los Angeles after the verdict saw firsthand the consequences of a community's response to a legal system perceived as unfair and biased. Fifty-three people died during the riots, including 10 killed by police or National Guard (Kavanagh, 2012). An estimated 2,000 people were injured, and the city suffered property losses estimated between $800 million and $1 billion (Kavanagh). Approximately 3,600 fires were set and over 1,100 buildings burned (Kavanagh). In the aftermath, federal prosecutors charged the four LAPD officers with violating King's civil rights. Two of the officers, Koon and Powell, were convicted and sentenced to 30 months in federal prison.

Why did the arrest of Rodney King escalate to excessive force? The tools of psychology suggest implicit bias may have played a role. Though police outnumbered King and were well-equipped with guns, tasers and batons, Koon reported that he "felt threatened" when King stepped out of the car (Independent Commission, 1992). He described King as big and muscular and said he believed King was disoriented, unbalanced and under the influence of PCP (Phencyclidine, street name is "angel dust") (Independent Commission). Rodney King said he had been drinking but toxicological tests indicated King had not taken PCP. The King arrest contains a number of points of evaluation that offer some insights into the behaviors of the police while also offering psychologists a window into how interracial violence occurs and potentially how to identify potential perpetrators.

Using the Police Officer's Dilemma paradigm, Correll and colleagues (2002) have demonstrated the risk of making racially biased decisions in pressured situations. The Police Officer's Dilemma paradigm was developed at the Stereotyping & Prejudice Research Laboratory in the Psychology Department at the University of Chicago under the direction of Joshua Correll. It is a videogame set in realistic surroundings in which players shoot all armed game characters while avoiding the unarmed. The targets are equally divided between Blacks and Whites to allow the researchers to examine how race places a role in the shooting of the targets. Using this paradigm, Payne's (2006) work shows that police officers are more likely to see weapons that are not present when they hold racial bias and stereotypic beliefs about African Americans (Eberhardt, Goff, Purdie & Davies, 2004; Payne, 2001; Payne, 2005; Payne, 2006; Payne, Lambert & Jacoby, 2002; Payne, Jacoby, & Lambert, 2005; Tannebaum, 2012).

Similar findings emerge in studies of brain response to Black faces which reveal that even other Blacks can show a response indicating fear when presented with a Black face stimulus (Amodio et al., 2004; Barthalow & Ito, 2010; Golby, Gabrieli, Chiao, & Eberhardt, 2001; Ito & Barthalow, 2009). The consequence of all of these 'automatic' responses to race is the making of a world that is particularly dangerous for young African American men and boys. The question for psychologists is whether the tools of science about racism and prejudice can and should be employed to address the escalating deaths that young African American men are facing at the hands of perpetrators of racism? Is our science strong enough and complete enough to advocate for its use with those who are identified as having potential attitudes and beliefs of racism and prejudice that put African Americans at risk for life-threatening consequences. We often see courts mandating anger-management training. Will a day come when based on the psychological science of racism and prejudice that individuals will be required to take training to make their implicit biases known and held accountable for monitoring those biases?

The Trayvon Martin Shooting and the Challenge to Psychological Science

Jury selection in the second-degree murder trial of George Zimmerman for the fatal shooting of Trayvon Martin is scheduled to begin in mid-2013. Until the facts emerge, it is difficult to draw firm inferences about the role of implicit bias in Trayvon Martin's death. It is clearer to see implicit biases at work in the media swarm that followed. Fox News host Geraldo Rivera, for example, asserted that Martin died because he had been wearing a hooded sweatshirt, or hoodie, at the time he was fatally shot. "I am urging the parents of Black and Latino youngsters particularly to not let their children go out wearing hoodies," Rivera said on "Fox & Friends." "I

think the hoodie is as much responsible for Trayvon Martin's death as George Zimmerman was" (Kung, 2012).

Rivera later apologized for his remarks, which drew criticism for suggesting that dark-skinned people in hoodies are seen as gangsters, and that this perception explains why Zimmerman shot Martin. Hoodies, in fact, are fashionable among young people of all races and have long been worn during exercise and outdoor activities, including by mothers walking their dogs (CBS Radio, 2012). In his apology, Rivera said his son Gabriel was ashamed of him (Lee, 2012). Psychological studies have demonstrated stereotyped associations linking race (Blackness) to crime and dangerousness (Correll, Wittenbrink, Park, Judd, & Goyle, 2011; Correll, Park, Judd, & Wittenbrink, 2007; Dovidio, Kawakami, & Gaertner, 2002; Eberhardt et al., 2004; Fiske, 1993; van den Bos, Lind, Vermunt, & Wilke, 1997).

Various psychological studies have found that embedded in the minds of individuals, even apart from whether or not they endorse beliefs of racial prejudice, is the perceived relationship among race, crime, and dangerousness (Eberhardt et al., 2004). When individuals grow up in a culture that endorses racial and ethnic stereotypes, these stereotypes can become ingrained despite conscious beliefs to the contrary (Correll, Wittenbrink, et al., 2011; Correll, Park, Judd, & Wittenbrink, 2007; Correll, Park, Judd, Wittenbrink, et al., 2007). The robustness of this effect is a testament to the power of cultural and racial stereotypes and the ease by which such stereotypes can be activated even when an individual might choose otherwise.

Whether Trayvon Martin's clothing had any implicit meaning for Zimmerman isn't known. In his 911 call before the shooting, Zimmerman identified Martin as black and "a real suspicious guy" who "looks like he's up to no good" (Mother Jones, 2012, p. 1). A 28-year-old neighborhood watch captain, Zimmerman, was aware that there had been several burglaries in his Florida community of Sanford in the 14 months before shooting. Residents of the Orlando suburb were on edge because of the spate of break-ins (CNN, 2012; Green, 2012). According to Zimmerman, the 911 call was followed by a confrontation that left Zimmerman with cuts and a bloody nose and Trayvon Martin dead. Zimmerman, who has pleaded not guilty to the second-degree murder charge, is using the "Stand Your Ground Law" self-defense law in Florida (The 2011 Florida Statute), which permits residents to use deadly force if they "reasonably believe it is necessary to do so to prevent death or great bodily harm to himself or herself or another or to prevent the commission of a forcible felony."

Tannenbaum (2012) argues that to prevent another Trayvon Martin tragedy, efforts must focus on more than the individual behaviors and motivations of Zimmerman. There are a number of questions, many of which psychological research can help address. What are the motivations of perpetrators of racism? Do they respond out of conditioned fear and anxiety? What are the characteristics of those most likely to engage in race-based discrimination? How would we identify these characteristics early in their manifestation? Are there psychological evidence-based effective interventions to keep the behaviors associated with bullying and hate crimes from occurring? In the United States, do we have policy or legal interventions in place for the social control of implicit bias? What are the shaping mechanisms of cognitive appraisal processes that result in misperceptions of threat (Mays, Barnes & Cochran, 2007)? What interventions are needed to decriminalize stereotypes of African Americans?

Implicit biases are not only important in law enforcement, but in other areas of African American life including health care. For example, Green and colleagues (2007) found that a physician's implicit, or unconscious, racial bias influenced recommendations for Black and White patients with acute coronary syndromes. Specifically, physicians with a pro-White implicit bias were more likely to treat White patients and not treat Black patients with thrombolysis. Numerous studies have also found that implicit biases impact physicians' clinical decision-making in other areas (Bogart, Catz, Kelly & Benotsch, 2001; Dovidio et al., 2008; Penner et al., 2010; Weisse, Sorum, Sanders & Syat, 2001). The implications of this are profound and to what extent these biases contribute to existing health disparities is an important area for future study (Krieger et al., 2010).

Buhin and Vera (2009) propose that we can prevent racism through psycho-educational and public policy interventions designed to avert the development of racist beliefs and attitudes in White children. And, psychology has provided us with an understanding of why people act the way they do. But efforts to reduce racism must be mindful of the effects of U.S. laws, federal, state, and local policies, and cultural norms in shaping our world. People can change; we know this as psychologists. And sometimes change can happen in the most unexpected, though scientifically predicted ways. For example, the election of President Barack Obama has lowered levels of implicit prejudice among Americans (Plant et al., 2009).

The origins of this manuscript started with a question from Dr. Norweeta Milburn on the official listserv of the members of the Division of the Society for the Scientific Study of Ethnic Minority Issues (Division 45) of the American Psychological Association. She wondered aloud how --- racial/ethnic minority psychologists in particular could assist in some way the community of Sanford, Florida, in the aftermath of the Trayvon Martin killing as the national psychology convention was scheduled to meet in Orlando, Florida (Milburn, 2012). Every year, the national meeting of the American Psychological Association (APA) convenes as many as 10,000 psychologists from across the United States. A significant number of these psychologists are racial/ethnic minorities who have strong personal and professional social justice commitments. These psychologists have a rich history of pro bono service in the city of the APA convention, efforts that are often overlooked and rarely highlighted. They have come together at the national conventions to address racial injustices through such pro bono activities as providing training of local providers in order to increase the provision of culturally specific services and training community members and professionals to be empowered leaders in their communities to respond to acts of racial injustice and race-based discrimination using psychological tools.

Any response to the Martin case that is designed to move beyond a focus on Zimmerman must draw on psychological science with regard to procedural fairness, perceived discrimination, social comparison, symbolic racism and other areas of psychology (van den Bos et al., 1998). There are social indicators that perform well in both predicting victims' responses to unfairness and the behavior of those persons likely to perpetrate race-based discrimination and racial hate crimes (Bigler & Liben, 2006; Bijleveld, Scheepers, & Ellemers, 2012; Hightower, 1997; Mays et al., 2007; Raabe & Beelmann, 2011; Williams & Eberhardt, 2008). The use of the "Stand Your Ground Law" (The 2011 Florida Statue, 2011) self-defense law allowed Zimmerman to remain free longer than the public is accustomed, which may undercut public perceptions of fairness.

While as of the writing of this article the Zimmerman case has not gone to trial, the larger question looms for psychology, are we prepared for the verdict of the case regardless of which

way that verdict goes? We have written in this article about the importance of perceived procedural fairness. We have described what happened in Los Angeles when the verdict was other than expected by the African American community. Must we wait until the verdict to begin working with the community of Sanford and others where young African American men have been shot in interracial interactions believed in those communities to be the result of racism and prejudice?

When psychologists have come together to use the tools of psychological science, such as in the cases of Brown vs. The Board of Education and in the trial of Angela Davis, they have served racial and ethnic minorities well. This same effort is now needed to address and balance, at a larger societal population-level, the embedded nature of negative cultural/racial bias and stereotypes (Dhont, Roets, & Van Hiel, 2011; Flaskerud, 2011; Paluck & Green, 2009) that endanger and cut short the lives of African American men and boys. Psychologists can use their tools to make the world a better place and ensure that the Trayvon Martins of the future can walk through a neighborhood without fearing for their lives. However, it requires many of us to be willing to believe that the tools of the psychological science of racism are valid and ready for application beyond the labs of psychology. It requires that we not only teach the students of psychology about the results of studies and impart hope for changing behavior that is based on racism and prejudice but that we embed the science and its potential interventions more broadly into societal expectations of race related interactions, into the courts and policies that mandate acceptable societal behaviors.

Psychological science of racism and prejudice offer those who experience racism the same opportunity to be protected against such behaviors in the same way policies have mandated behaviors and training for sexual harassment and bullying. Is psychology ready to move from crisis driven responses to race-related violence with African Americans toward pursuing opportunities to use its science for change at the level of policy and practice much like the Clarks in the 50's?

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