

Good research paper on race bias, facial recognition and recall: the effects of r...

[Sociology](#), [Racism](#)



Introduction

Race bias has been the topic of numerous psychological, sociological, and anthropological studies over the years. Even with an evolved understanding of the nature of race and the importance of racial equality, there are still psychological effects associated with race and race bias (Meissner & Brigham, 2001). It has long been known that individuals of any given race have a much easier time recognizing individuals from that same group than they do for individuals in an out-group—this is known as a cross-race or own-race bias (Sporer, 2001). Sporer (2001) writes, “ Studies of the recognition of faces of an ethnic group different from one's own reveal a robust recognition deficit for faces of the respective out-group (cross-race effect or own-race bias) and a tendency to respond less cautiously with respect to out-group faces. Cross-national comparisons reveal that the cross-race effect appears to be larger among low-contact groups” (Sporer, 2001). Individuals who are exposed frequently to members of another race—a White student growing up in a predominantly Korean part of town, for instance—show better facial recognition than an individual that has spent no time with that particular racial group (Sporer, 2001). Thus, research suggests that there is a psychological understanding of race, and that in-group recognition is quite strong, but that proximity also plays a role in recognition and recall, as does exposure (DeLozier & Rhodes, 2015).

Interracial recognition is also largely influenced by exposure, as Sporer (2001) notes; however, perceptual learning is something that can be affected both naturally and artificially. Perceptual learning, posited early in educational and learning theory, posits that exposure to something can

increase an individual's ability to glean information quickly and easily about that particular subject (Sporer, 2001). Sporer (2001) suggests that the literature notes that procedural learning occurs through the development of differentiation skills—that is, the ability of the individual to determine details (variant and invariant) from an environment or situation (Sporer, 2001; DeLozier & Rhodes, 2015). Procedural learning is the primary process by which an individual becomes able to overcome the cross-race or own-race bias; this can, of course, be introduced into an individual's life naturally, through geographical location, or unnaturally, through processes like bussing (Meissner & Brigham, 2001). Some researchers also suggest that procedural learning can be taught to students through the use of discrimination training and other training types (Sporer, 2001; DeLozier & Rhodes, 2015).

Researchers suggest that discrimination training can help students determine the differential characteristics of individuals within other ethnic or racial groups (Sporer, 2001; DeLozier & Rhodes, 2015; Randall et al., 2012). DeLozier and Rhodes (2015) suggest that the mechanism for this type of own-race bias is particularly important to understand; to understand this mechanism, the researchers attempted to determine whether the subjects assigned value to the task of memorizing and recalling a face (DeLozier & Rhodes, 2015). The researchers determined that individuals who were of the same race as the subject were assigned a higher “value” to learn by the subject, and those who were of a different race were assigned a lower “value” for the completion of the task (DeLozier & Rhodes, 2015). This is particularly important for the development of understanding of the psychological process of memory, recall, and own-race bias, because it gives

researchers insight into how the brain assigns value (DeLozier & Rhodes, 2015). DeLozier and Rhodes (2015) determined that the paradigm for memory and own-race bias is a value-based paradigm, different from the exposure-based paradigm that some of the other researchers rely heavily upon (Sporer, 2001; DeLozier & Rhodes, 2015; Randall et al., 2012; Meissner & Brigham, 2001).

Memory and recall can be difficult things to study, because there are so many variables that impact an individual's ability for both memory and recall (Meissner & Brigham, 2001; Randall et al., 2012). Because studies that focus on cross-race or own-race bias generally focus on providing a participant with a " filler" activity before the recall test, there can be large variability in the results based on the time of the filler activity (Meissner & Brigham, 2001; Randall et al., 2012). There are also a number of other important psychological functions associated with memory, recall, and own-race bias (Meissner & Brigham, 2001; Randall et al., 2012; DeLozier & Rhodes, 2015). Some people, when doing recognition tasks, are more precise than others; others have a high rate of accuracy, but a low rate of precision (Sporer, 2001). However, even with these many variations in recall and the many problems with testing memory and recall, there are still trends that can be noted across the many studies on own-race bias, there have been clear trends that demonstrate that bias has an effect on both memory and recall for human beings as a whole (Meissner & Brigham, 2001; Randall et al., 2012; Sporer, 2001, DeLozier & Rhodes, 2015).

This particular study will investigate the factors of race of face (Caucasian and African American), and factors of attending school (Sam Houston State

University, Harvard, University of Phoenix, and Houston Community College). Participants in the study will be asked to look at a photo of an individual with the name of one of these institutions, and will then be asked to recall the face and the institution attached to this face—the recognition task focuses on face recall. The literature suggests that individuals in the study will have better recall for same-race individuals; thus, the researchers hypothesize that own-race bias will play a significant role in study participants' ability to recognize faces and recall them during the recognition task (Sporer, 2001; DeLozier & Rhodes, 2015; Randall et al., 2012).). There have been a number of studies that have looked at the different levels of face recognition that different ages possess, and it has been found that young adults have the best facial recognition skills, especially when compared to children and the elderly (Randall et al., 2012). There seems to be a variation that occurs between individuals of different ages regarding how they perceive other faces, as well as how they understand faces; the psychological investigation of how race is perceived will be completed in the study using only individuals of similar ages (Meissner & Brigham, 2001; Randall et al., 2012). The concept of own-race bias, also known as cross-race bias, will be the focus of the investigation (Meissner & Brigham, 2001; Randall et al., 2012). The researchers hypothesize that individuals in the current study will demonstrate own-race bias when completing memory and recall tasks. According to the literature, own-race bias is a psychological phenomenon that suggests that individuals of one ethnic group or race have a much harder time recognizing and recalling individuals from outside their ethnic group (Sporer, 2001; DeLozier & Rhodes, 2015). Although this may be a

difficult concept to apply across all racial groups and human experiences, there is ample evidence to suggest that the own-race bias exists in individuals of all ethnic groups and races, regardless of group status (Meissner & Brigham, 2001). The effect has been shown to be replicable across a variety of studies, including studies that have examined the role of a specific racial group on the own-race bias that exists within a specific individual (Meissner & Brigham, 2001). In addition, there has been ample evidence that own race bias exists across a number of different memory tasks, not just recall-related tasks (Meissner & Brigham, 2001; Randall et al., 2012). Because the literature shows so strongly a trend for own-race bias, the researchers expect that the individuals in the study will demonstrate a strong own-race bias.

References

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