

# **Personality and Racial/Ethnic Relations: A Perspective From Cognitive–Affective Personality System (CAPS) Theory**

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**ABSTRACT** The five articles in this special section examine personality and racial/ethnic relations from the perspective of Mischel and Shoda's Cognitive–Affective Personality System (CAPS) Theory. In this introductory piece, we first provide a primer on CAPS theory. In particular, we try to highlight the role that context plays in the construction and manifestation of personality as well as the dynamic ways that people interpret and react to input from their environment. We then review research on race-based rejection sensitivity as a programmatic illustration of the role expectancies play in racial/ethnic relations. Finally, we summarize and tie together the articles that comprise this section via a set of emergent themes that are common to the present contributions.

In the latter part of the 1990s, Walter Mischel and Yuichi Shoda (1995, 1998, 1999) published their Cognitive–Affective Personality System, or CAPS, theory, which attempts to account both for the stability of personality dispositions as well as the behavioral variability that characterizes people's behavior across situations or contexts. Approximately a decade later (October 2008), a Web-based Google Scholar search revealed over 800 citations for these works, underscoring the profound impact that CAPS theory has had in the field since it was first shared with the scientific community. The insights of CAPS theory have been applied to areas as varied as health psychology (Miller, Shoda, & Hurley, 1996), clinical psychology

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(Ayduk & Gyurak, 2008; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001), person perception (Mendoza-Denton, Park, & O'Connor, 2007, 2008), and cultural psychology (Mendoza-Denton & Mischel, 2007). In this special section of the *Journal of Personality*, we examine CAPS theory in relation to racial and ethnic relations. More specifically, we draw on CAPS theory to help us address the following question: How do we conceptualize the relation between such a quintessentially social and contextualized phenomenon as prejudice on the one hand and personality dispositions on the other?

CAPS theory is explicitly framed as a meta-theoretical framework that sets forth a set of general principles that govern individuals' cognitive-affective dynamics vis-à-vis situations. These principles are thus applicable across a wide range of domains; however, their specific utility in a given domain is contingent on the specification of these principles. For example, a central tenet of CAPS theory (discussed in greater detail below) is that people's behavior is mediated by a network of *cognitive-affective units* that include goals, expectations, and beliefs. But *what* are the relevant such goals, expectations, and beliefs that are specific to understanding prejudice and improving racial and ethnic relations?

In answering this question, we have brought together a group of scholars whose work embodies specific instantiations of CAPS principles, allowing simultaneously for both specificity of prediction as well as an understanding of general principles at work. Sinclair, Pappas, and Lun (this issue) review research related to shared reality theory and self-stereotyping, noting that "shared reality theory contrasts with the generality of CAPS theory by making predictions regarding the nature of pertinent goals and expectations and how these constructs inter-relate to produce self-understanding in a given context." Hong, Chao, and No (this issue) discuss how people's beliefs in race as an essential versus socially constructed quality affect our perceptions of outgroup members and our intergroup interactions, focusing "on how common people's understanding about the nature of race sets up meaning systems within which they interpret and understand social information as racially keyed and, in turn, invokes a specific course of action." Butz and Plant (this issue) focus on people's motivation to control prejudice, explicitly recognizing that such motivation "is closely connected to other cognitive-affective units of personality, and together these motivational, affective, and cognitive responses influence people's responses in interracial interactions," Finally, within

this introductory piece, we review research on anxious expectations of race-based rejection, highlighting how the predictions and findings regarding the psychological sequelae of such expectations provide consistent support for the principles outlined by the CAPS model. Together, these contributions provide balance by addressing personality, process, and prejudice both from the perspective of those imparting prejudice (Butz & Plant; Hong et al.) and those who are targets of prejudice (Hong et al.; Mendoza-Denton & Goldman-Flythe; Sinclair et al.).

### Overview of this Article and of the Special Section

In this introductory article, we first provide a brief overview of CAPS theory (we refer readers to Mischel & Shoda, 2008, for a more in-depth treatment of CAPS and to Mendoza-Denton & Mischel, 2007, specifically for a discussion of social/cultural context and CAPS). Following this overview, we discuss research on *race-based rejection sensitivity* (Mendoza-Denton, Downey, Purdie, Davis, & Pietrzak, 2002; Mendoza-Denton, Pietrzak, & Downey, 2008) as a specific instantiation of CAPS that highlights the interplay of expectations and affect in determining minority individual's responding in potentially discriminatory situations and social contexts. We conclude this article by explicitly pointing out consistent themes that emerge and are illustrated in each of the research programs reviewed here. As such, this last section can be thought to provide a kind of road map to the special section, which concludes with a commentary by Mischel, Mendoza-Denton, and Hong.

### Cognitive–Affective Personality System (Caps) Theory: a Primer

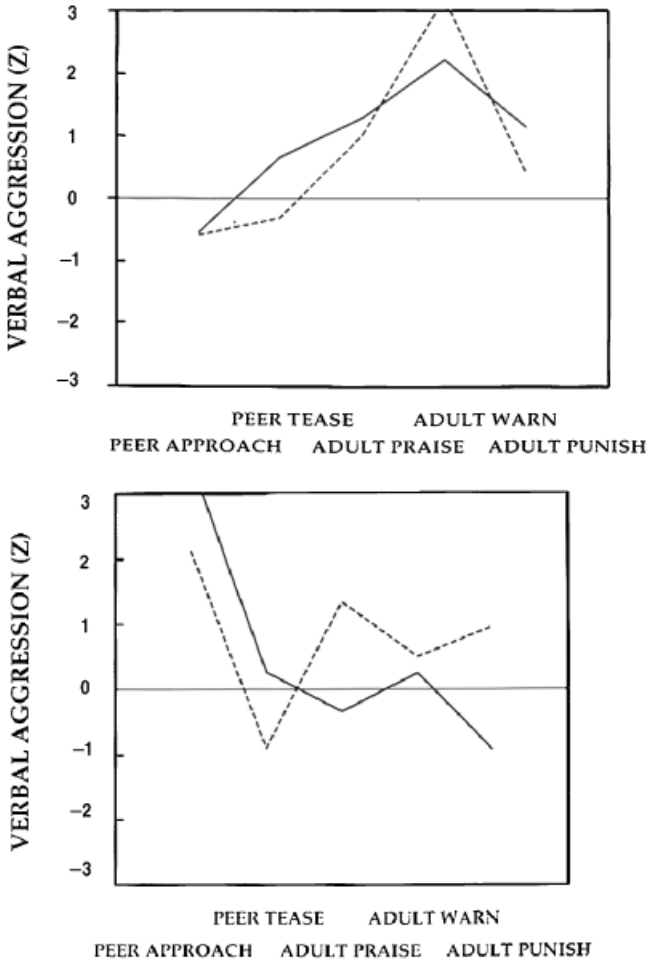
Over the past two decades, a body of research has emerged recognizing that personality processes are intertwined with, and revealed through, behavioral variability across contexts (Fleeson, 2001; Fournier, Moskowitz, & Zuroff, 2008; Mendoza-Denton & Mischel, 2007; Mischel & Shoda, 1995). Imagine, for example, a midlevel executive who is kind and agreeable to her supervisors but does not address or interact with the lower level office staff. Another executive of the company, by contrast, is friendly toward the lower level staff but does not address or interact with her superiors and supervisors. Can such patterns be informative about personality process?

For this to be the case, it is necessary to establish the stability of the patterns. Person 1, for example, may not always be cold to staff and, instead, may have stayed up all night caring for a colicky baby. Person 2 may have recently heard rumors about company layoffs and may be expressly trying to remain “beneath the radar.” These are examples of ways in which the relative contributions of situational factors may be understandably “discounted” in the assessment of personality dispositions (see Gilbert & Malone, 1995). However, if these patterns are indeed stable—that is, if Person 1 is *reliably* friendly to superiors and cold to staff, and Person 2 *reliably* displays the opposite pattern—they invite dynamic explanations about each person’s underlying “inner lives” (e.g., Person 1 is a kiss-up that wants to get ahead; Person 2 disdains hierarchy and abhors the “fat cats”; see Kammrath, Mendoza-Denton, & Mischel, 2005) and call for a theoretical framework that can somehow incorporate these dynamic explanations and account for people’s stable patterns of behavioral variability across situations—their *if . . . then . . . signatures* (if Situation A, then she or he does X, but if Situation B, then she or he does Y). CAPS theory was proposed with such a goal in mind.

#### *Do Stable Situation–Behavior Patterns Exist?*

A fundamental question to address is whether *if . . . then . . .* profiles characterize, at least in part, the actual behavior of people. To explore this question, Shoda, Mischel, and Wright (1994) tracked the behavior of a group of children in relation to five psychologically meaningful situations for the campers—peers teasing, peers approaching sociably, adults warning, adults punishing, and adults praising. The data revealed predictable and nonrandom patterns of behavioral variability across situations over and above the expected situational pull on behavior (e.g., greater levels of overall aggression if provoked than if praised). To examine the *stability* of the profiles, Shoda et al. first standardized aggression scores within each situation, thus revealing a given individual’s level of aggression above and beyond what would be normally expected in that situation. Each child’s profile was then compared across two separate, nonoverlapping subsamples of situations, allowing the researchers to assess the stability of the situation–behavior patterns. Figure 1 shows illustrative examples of the stability of *if . . . then . . .* profiles from two of the

children in the camp setting, where the solid and dotted lines represent the nonoverlapping samples of situations. As the figure shows, whereas the child represented in the top panel was reliably more aggressive than other peers when warned by an adult but not when approached sociably, the child represented in the bottom panel was



**Figure 1**

Illustrative patterns of verbal aggression across five different psychological situations for two children at a summer camp; solid and dotted lines represent two nonoverlapping samples of observations (from Shoda et al., 1994).

less reactive when warned but became hostile when approached sociably.

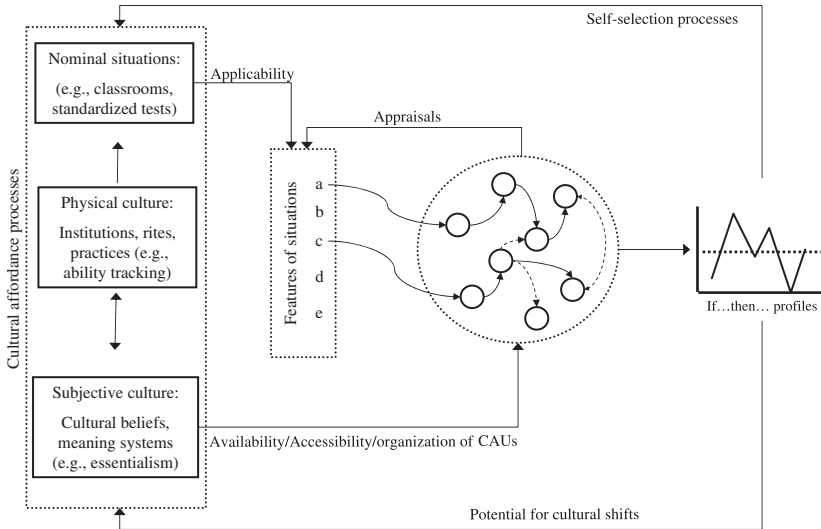
The stability coefficients ranged from .19 to .47 across the camp situations, suggesting an important and stable facet of individual differences (Shoda et al., 1994). More recently, Fournier et al. (2008) found impressive stability in people's *if . . . then . . .* profiles in social interactions with different kinds of people (e.g., agreeable-dominant people vs. quarrelsome-dominant people). English and Chen (2007) have shown, in contrast to the notion that the Asian self-concept is not stable across situations (e.g., Cousins, 1989), that Asian Americans' self-concept is quite stable *within* situation types and forms an *if . . . then . . .* pattern.

*Explaining If . . . Then . . . Patterns in Personality: The Cognitive Affective Personality System*

CAPS theory brings together and reflects the influence of three distinct theoretical and empirical traditions. The first influence is Mischel's (1973) cognitive-social theory and in particular the kinds of person variables that are likely to be the "nuts and bolts" of the personality system. The second influence is research and theory on connectionism (see, e.g., Read & Miller, 1998) that emphasizes interconnections between these variables (the cables that connect the bolts). The third influence is research on knowledge activation (e.g., Higgins, 1996) that specifies the principles through which such knowledge becomes activated (the switches for the bolts and cables). We discuss each of these below alongside Figure 2, which represents a schematized illustration of CAPS within its cultural context and is adapted from Mendoza-Denton and Mischel (2007).

*"Units" for the System*

Mischel and Shoda (1995, 1999) identified five distinct types of nuts and bolts referred to as *cognitive-affective units* or CAUs: encodings, expectancies and beliefs, affects, goals and values, and competencies and self-regulatory abilities. These CAUs summarize and organize the important social information-processing variables that have been identified in social cognition research and in cultural psychology as playing a role in behavior generation. In Figure 2, CAUs are schematized as the small circles that are within the larger circle (the



**Figure 2**

**CAPS within its cultural context: Dynamic cultural processes (left box) both shape and are shaped by dynamic personality processes (middle circle).** Adapted from Mendoza-Denton & Mischel (2007).

person) in the center of the figure. As the articles in this special section make clear, research has identified a variety of important CAU-type variables that are central to our understanding of prejudice and racial/ethnic relations: people's *motivation* to control prejudice (Butz & Plant, this issue), their *goals* to affiliate both within and across group boundaries (Sinclair et al., this issue), their *beliefs* in essentialism (Hong et al., this issue), and their anxious *expectations* of experiencing prejudice (Mendoza-Denton et al., 2002). The common focus across these is on the psychological mediating processes that underlie individual differences in behavior (the research represented here is, of course, not exhaustive; among other examples are personal *need* for structure; Neberg & Newsom, 1993, and individual differences in promotion and prevention *goals*; Shah, Brazy, & Higgins, 2004).

We underscore that cognitive-affective units already begin to blur the line between person and context by recognizing that these aspects of the self are not biological, inborn, or otherwise "context free" but rather quite explicitly depend in their content on the input from one's environment and cultural milieu (Mendoza-Denton & Mischel,

2007; Mischel & Shoda, 1995). Further, the influence of culture to persons is co-constitutional, or reciprocal. People are influenced by their surrounding culture, but they also reify and reinforce cultural beliefs, goals, and values through their actions, rites, and institution (Mendoza-Denton & Mischel, 2007). This influence is schematized in the large box on the left hand side of Figure 2 labeled “cultural affordance processes.” As illustrated in the figure, context can be influenced by cultural shifts that begin at the level of individual behavior (the bottom arrow in the figure) but also affects people through principles of knowledge activation (availability, accessibility, applicability, and organization, described below). As one example, valuing heritage and tradition can give rise to organizations that lobby for conservative leadership that lead to conservative legislation, which makes value-consistent behaviors more likely while increasing the accessibility of the cultural value. As another example, an essentialist belief (see Hong et al., this issue) that people are born with fixed levels of ability and intelligence has led to the creation of diagnostic “tests” for such ability and the institutionalization of practices that reinforce this fixed view such as tracking students according to ability levels in schooling. The suspicion of immutable intelligence is threatening for negatively stereotyped groups and dampens test performance (Good, Aronson, & Inzlicht, 2003). However, the same suspicion of immutable ability *protects* positively stereotyped groups and boosts their performance (Mendoza-Denton, Kahn, & Chan, 2008), further entrenching group-level differences and reinforcing notions of immutability. The implication for this special section is that the CAPS approach allows us to also consider the effects of context and culture as important influences on stable personality dynamics.

### From Cognitive–Affective Units to Networks of Activation

Drawing on insights from connectionism (see Read & Miller, 1998) as well as principles of knowledge activation (e.g., Higgins, 1996), CAPS theory proposes that an individual’s CAUs do not exist in isolation but rather interact with other CAUs in a dynamic network of activation (represented by the solid and dotted arrows connecting the CAUs in Figure 2). Certain representations have a positive or excitatory link to other representations in the network (the solid arrows), whereas other interconnections are inhibitory or negative (the



dotted arrows). For example, for some individuals, expectations of rejection have an excitatory link to behavioral scripts of partner aggression, whereas for others the link to self-silencing and depression is stronger (Ayduk, May, Downey, & Higgins, 2003). Because some individuals share similar experiences and historical inheritances by way of shared group membership, it makes sense that CAU network differences can also occur at the group level. The richness and complexity of individual differences not only stems from the content of one's CAU's per se but also from the organization of the network, which is frequently shared by individuals with similar experiences.

### *Accounting for If . . . Then . . . Profiles*

How do we go from networks of cognitive–affective mechanisms to *if . . . then . . .* patterns of behavior? This is the juncture at which principles of knowledge activation come into play. CAPS theory proposes that for a given CAU, its level of activation (a) is not constant and (b) depends on features of the context. Higgins (1996) distinguished specifically between *availability*, *accessibility*, and *applicability* with respect to knowledge structures. *Availability* refers to whether a particular cognitive–affective unit (or network of CAUs) can be found within the personality system in the first place. For example, in the case of helping behavior, research shows that even with the best intentions, sometimes people are prevented from acting because they do not know how to provide help (Latane & Darley, 1970).

Of importance here is that even though a particular CAU or subset of CAUs may be available to a person, not all of these units are activated at any one time. Thus, even though a person may potentially have a wide number of cognitive affective processes available (e.g., processes that can lead to helping or aggression or prosocial behavior), only those that are *accessible* (i.e., above a given threshold of activation) are likely to have an influence on subsequent behavior generation. Reading an article on anti-immigration protests on the train home, for example, may make nationality cognitions and scripts more accessible to the individual and thus more likely to influence a dinnertime decision to address a bilingual colleague in one language or another. Alternatively, nationality concerns may be *chronically accessible* to a person as part of his or her identity and thus more likely to be used as a framework for understanding stimuli across a wider range of contexts.

Finally, of all the beliefs, goals, values, encodings, and feelings that one can potentially experience at any given time, only those that are *relevant* in a given situation are likely to become accessible and influence subsequent behavior. This is the concept of *applicability*. For example, Banaji, Hardin, and Rothman (1993) found that participants for whom the construct “aggressive” had been primed used this construct in subsequent judgments of male targets but not of female targets. This finding illustrates accessibility effects because, in general, the term “aggressive” is applicable to male targets but not to female targets. Applicability is important because in order for particular constructs to be used, it is not enough for them to be accessible—they must also be applicable to a relevant stimulus or situation.

### *Nominal Versus Psychological Situations*

In terms of understanding ethnic/racial relations, CAPS theory underscores how the differential availability and accessibility of constructs can yield divergent interpretations and behavioral reactions to the “same” situation (see also Mendoza-Denton & Hansen, 2007). Thus, the same *nominal* situation may yield different *psychological* situations for different groups. This was dramatically demonstrated in the United States by striking racial group differences in reactions to the O.J. Simpson 1995 criminal trial verdict (Mendoza-Denton, Ayduk, Shoda, & Mischel, 1997). This trial, which featured an African American defendant (Simpson) charged with the murder of his spouse, also featured a White police officer who may have purposefully planted a bloody glove at the crime scene—a glove that did not, in fact, fit Simpson’s hand. The falsification of evidence that this implied made the issue of police bias applicable for many African Americans and contributed to elated reactions following the not-guilty verdict. Such systematic police bias was not as accessible to many White Americans, who instead decried the mountain of evidence against the defendant and thus reacted to the not-guilty verdict with dismay. Importantly, this research also identified a subset of people for whom the trial was applicable both to racial injustice as well as domestic violence and thus reacted with a complex combination of emotions. Importantly, Mendoza-Denton et al. (1997) showed that the effect of “race” as a categorical variable disappeared when these cognitive affective processes were taken into account.

A second example comes from people's reactions to the federal emergency response following the devastation of New Orleans in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. Again, whereas systematic discrimination was an applicable explanation to the federal response for African Americans (given the poorly executed response for Katrina's poorest victims, who were overwhelmingly African American), White Americans tended to favor a response that did not invoke racism per se but rather one that emphasized the magnitude of the disaster and the sheer difficulty of coordinating an effective response for anyone (Levy, Freitas, Mendoza-Denton, & Kugelmass, 2006). Levy and colleagues demonstrated that following this hurricane, African Americans' endorsement of the belief that hard work pays off (the Protestant Work Ethic, or PWE) was reduced during the months following the disaster, whereas White Americans' endorsement of this particular cultural value was not affected, presumably due to a recognition among African Americans of broader structural/institutional forces negatively impacting one's outcomes independently of one's hard work. This finding is a good illustration not only of differences in accessibility and applicability of different constructs but also of differences in the network of associated constructs (in this case, the PWE) that particular events and situations differentially activate among members of cultural groups.

Both of the above examples support the argument that ethnic/racial relations cannot be explained by sociocultural factors, group membership, or individual differences in isolation. Rather, explanations of behavior must take into account the connectedness of these variables: CAPS theory provides an explicit framework that researchers can use to manage such complexity.

#### Personality Processes in Context: Race-based Rejection Sensitivity

In this second section, we review research on *race-based rejection sensitivity* as one programmatic attempt to illustrate how a CAPS framework can inform our understanding of the dynamic interplay between personality and racial/ethnic relations. The CAPS framework allows us to conceptualize the ways in which prior experiences of discrimination can affect people's *expectancies* about the ways in which they might be treated in the future. Such expectancies, which can become a stable feature of a person's CAPS network (CAUs),

influence subsequent cognitions and intergroup behavior. To further illustrate the complex ways in which personality and cultural context are mutually constitutive of one another (cf. Kitayama & Cohen, 2007), we contrast status-based rejection sensitivity among African Americans and Asian Americans in the U.S. context.

### *Theoretical Background—The Rejection Sensitivity Model*

Growing out of a larger literature on attachment (see, e.g., Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980) emphasizing that our early experiences shape the way we function in future relationships, Geraldine Downey and her colleagues (Downey & Feldman, 1996; Feldman & Downey, 1994) have proposed a model of Rejection Sensitivity (RS), whereby prior experiences of rejection (in the form of physical or emotional abuse or neglect) lead people to develop anxious expectations of rejection; these anxious expectations are activated specifically in future situations where such rejection is applicable and possible. Once these expectations are activated, people are more likely to be vigilant for the threatening outcome (i.e., rejection), increasing the likelihood of perceiving such rejection in the behavior of their significant others. Once the rejection is perceived, the person is more likely to respond with hot, emotion-laden reactions to the event. Importantly, this dynamic, while being a stable aspect of a person's CAPS, is specifically activated only in situations that afford the possibility of rejection and has been distinguished both theoretically and empirically from generalized neuroticism (for a review of this literature, see Ayduk & Gyurak, 2008).

### *From Rejection Sensitivity to Race-Based Rejection Sensitivity*

People can be rejected not only on the basis of their unique characteristics but also on the basis of attributes that they share with members of other groups, such as their sexual orientation (Pachankis, Goldfried, & Ramrattan, 2008), their gender (London, Downey, Rattan, & Velilla, 2004; Mendoza-Denton, Shaw-Taylor, Chen, & Chang, 2009), or—the case we will focus on here—their race. Mendoza-Denton et al. (2002) postulated that direct or vicarious experiences of discrimination, mistreatment, or prejudice on the basis of one's race or ethnicity may lead to *race-based rejection sensitivity* (RS-race), the core of which is anxious expectations

of race-based rejection (research consistently points to the idea that prejudice and discrimination are experienced as rejection; Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999; Essed, 1991; Root, 1992). Unlike the case of personal rejection, however, with race-based rejection people can become concerned that they will be rejected on the basis of their race through either personal or *vicarious* experiences—that is, one does not need to experience the rejection oneself to understand that one can be the target of similar race-based rejection.

### *Different Triggers and Outcomes for Different Groups*

Situations such as asking one's significant other to meet one's family have been shown to readily activate expectations of personal rejection. By contrast, race-based rejection expectations are triggered in different types of situations, and these situations differ depending on the group in question.

Mendoza-Denton et al. (2002) conducted focus groups to find out the situations that activate race-based rejection concerns among African Americans and constructed a questionnaire based on those situations. The kinds of situations included scenarios such as being stopped during a random traffic stop or being passed over for an opportunity to answer a difficult question in class. The researchers administered this questionnaire to a sample of African American, European American, and Asian American undergraduates. As expected, African Americans scored highest on the measure, whereas European American and Asian American participants scored low on the measure and did not differ. As expected, for African Americans, individual differences in RS-race predicted, over a 3-week period, reports of rejection as well as more intense feelings of alienation and rejection following the rejection. Over the course of five semesters, individual differences in RS-race as measured by the RS-race questionnaire predicted students' academic adjustment. This included students' attendance at review sessions, their comfort interacting with professors and teaching assistants, and their grade point average (GPA). However, consistent with prior research (Crocker & Major, 1989), RS-race is unrelated to self-esteem. We highlight these relationships of RS-race to the above outcomes because, as we discuss next, both triggers and outcomes are different when we consider race-based rejection sensitivity among Asian Americans.

*RS-Race Among Asian Americans*

As described above, the original RS-race questionnaire that was designed specifically for African Americans yielded low scores as well as low variability in anxious expectations among Asian Americans. This result can be easily misconstrued as meaning that Asian Americans do not experience as much discrimination as African Americans and is consistent with stereotypes of Asian Americans as a “model minority.” However, as several researchers note, Asian Americans report experiences that contradict this notion and report that they experience just as much discrimination as other groups (Okazaki, 1997).

Chan and Mendoza-Denton (2008) recently investigated how the dynamic of race-based rejection sensitivity unfolds among Asian Americans. Focus groups revealed that the situations likely to trigger Asian Americans’ concerns are much different than those triggering the concerns of African Americans—being concerned over whether one will be invited to join an athletic game, for example, or being left out of a social evening on the assumption that nerds do not go out seem to be the situations that resonate with Asian Americans as triggers of their race-based rejection concerns. In contrast to the findings for African Americans, Chan and Mendoza-Denton have shown that, controlling for rejection sensitivity in the interpersonal domain, the race-based rejection sensitivity scale for Asian Americans (RS-A) that resulted from these focus groups is uncorrelated with academic performance and GPA. Even more intriguingly, RS-race among Asian Americans was consistently *negatively* correlated with self-esteem and positively with depressive symptoms and social anxiety. How can we understand the different patterning of RS-race among African Americans and Asian Americans?

These group-level differences in the relationship of RS-race to particular outcomes (i.e., GPA vs. self-esteem) are reflective of the principle that stable personality dynamics are shaped and triggered by sociocultural forces. The academically related triggers and outcomes that are linked to RS-race among African Americans reflect a long and painful history related to the suspicion that African Americans are intellectually inferior to Whites (see also Hong et al., this issue). At the same time, as Chan and Mendoza-Denton (2008) argue, a powerful and meaningful civil rights movement was a catalyst that successfully increased for this group the chronic accessi-

bility of prejudice as an explanation for negative outcomes among African Americans, thereby allowing for the protection of self-esteem (see also Twenge & Crocker, 2002, for historical data supporting this view). By contrast, Asian Americans have not had the benefit of a large-scale civil rights movement to raise collective consciousness and make discounting of negative outcomes a culturally accepted coping strategy for discrimination. As such, individual and group-level *if . . . then . . .* profiles reflect sociohistorical forces: African Americans, *if* experiencing rejection from an outgroup member, may *then* not attribute the outcome to themselves (and thus suffer no drop in self-esteem) as a result of a culturally shared set of cognitions recognizing prejudice as a source of negative outcomes. Asian Americans, *if* discriminated against, may *then* in fact feel responsible for the negative outcome (and suffer decreases in self-esteem), reflecting a lack of culturally shared protective cognitions. In other words, the same cognitive-affective dynamic—in this case anxious expectations, ready perceptions, and intense reactions to race-based rejection—can be at one level shared by members of different groups but at a second level be completely different in its triggers and consequences.

### Caps “in Action”: The Contributions to this Special Section

We have reviewed research on RS-race as a specific example of how CAPS theory has informed a specific research program that focuses specifically on stigmatized group members' reactions to and coping mechanisms for the discrimination that they face. The work, though explicitly guided by CAPS theory from its inception (see Mendoza-Denton et al., 2002), nevertheless required specifying the CAUs of interest (affects and expectations), the expected *if . . . then . . .* profiles that would reflect these CAUs, as well as the particular sociohistorical realities that have shaped the specific lenses through which particular cultural groups navigate their world.

The rest of this special section highlights three more exciting research programs—on beliefs in essentialism (Hong et al.), on motivation to control prejudice (Butz & Plant), and on shared-reality theory (Sinclair et al.)—as yet other examples of CAPS theory, as it were, “in action.” In each case, the authors have attempted, as we have in our treatment of RS-race, to explicitly draw links from their work to CAPS theory.

*Emergent Themes*

An emergent quality arises from the totality of the contributions—a set of themes that seem to run across all of the research programs that are covered here and that parallel the general principles put forward by CAPS theory (readers will also recognize them in the review above of RS-race). These themes are (a) historical and social context matters, (b) interrelations among CAUs matter, and (c) situations matter. The rest of this introduction is devoted to highlighting these themes, explicitly providing examples of how the present contributions reflect a particular theme.

*Historical and Social Context Matters*

Mendoza-Denton and Mischel (2007) note that “life experiences shared by members of a group—the teachings of elders, the experiences shared with others, the values imposed by society—generate a CAPS network that is immersed in and reflects the surrounding culture” (p. 182). In terms of historical context, we have reviewed above how people’s anxious expectations with respect to race are borne of the fact that race has carried specific symbolic import within this country, with different groups having been subjected historically to different stereotypes (e.g., African Americans as athletic but intellectually inferior, Asian Americans as intelligent but unathletic). This historical backdrop sets the stage for the different triggers and outcomes of RS-race associated with different groups. Similarly, Butz and Plant (this issue) observe, “it is difficult to consider prejudice in contemporary society without taking into account the significant implications of social context and the norms regarding the expression of prejudice.” They make the subtle but critical point that motivation to control racial prejudice develops only the presence of historically developed social sanctions against such prejudice—a condition that is much less descriptive, for example, of prejudice toward those suffering from mental illness (Hinshaw, 2007).

In terms of social context, Hong et al. (this issue) note that “lay theories of race do not exist in a social vacuum . . . [and] may reflect the shared consensus in the society,” citing research (No et al., 2008) showing that priming people with a given lay theory from what is perceived to be a legitimate news outlet can shift people’s own belief systems. Hong et al. make the important point here



that an essentialist cultural zeitgeist that prizes genetically based discoveries and explanations for human attributes can affect the chronic accessibility of an essentialist race theory at the level of the individual. Consider also the work of Sinclair et al. (this issue), who review work relevant to self-stereotyping and significant others. They discuss how, whereas women's degree of self-stereotyping is related to how they assume significant others see them and expect them to be, African Americans' self-stereotyping is unrelated to how they expect significant others to see them, because they tend to think that their significant others do not endorse these stereotypes. This is an important point because it reflects the greater overall cultural acceptance and lack of cultural inhibitions against using and applying gender stereotypes versus applying stereotypes against African Americans (see also Mendoza-Denton, Park, & O'Connor, 2008).

#### *Interrelations Among CAUs Matter*

A second theme that emerges from the four research programs included here is that beliefs, goals, expectations, and other aspects of people's "inner lives" interface and interact with each other. This, of course, underscores the principle from CAPS theory that CAUs operate within an interconnected network. Hong et al. provide an in-depth review of how lay *beliefs* about race in either essentialist or social constructionist terms shape an entire host of downstream processes, from encoding to inferences to group differentiation to stereotyping to how then people interpret intergroup interactions. As another example, Mendoza-Denton and colleagues have shown that anxious expectations of race-based rejection affect how people subsequently *encode* future situations in which such rejection is applicable and possible, how they react behaviorally to such rejection, and how they subsequently cope in a potentially toxic environment. Sinclair et al. discuss how the strength of people's affiliative *motivation* leads them to shift their *beliefs* in tune with other people so as to increase shared reality, which can subsequently lead to self-stereotyping. Butz and Plant similarly make clear the interplay of various CAUs—people are motivated to respond without prejudice, but their specific personal *endorsement* of egalitarianism as a personal *value* affects their internal motivation and how much they value others' views affects their external

motivation. Although CAPS theory brought insights from connectionism to bear on personality, in these examples we see such connections at work, no longer in the abstract form of Figure 2 but now specifically instantiated as they relate to personality and intergroup processes.

### *Situations Matter*

One of the fundamental insights from CAPS is that situations play a fundamental role in the development and expression of personality systems. This insight may be particularly relevant in the domain of stigma, where many of today's instantiations of stigma are no longer of an overt, explicit nature. Indeed, targets of prejudice and discrimination are often confronted with "attributional ambiguity" (Crocker, Voelkl, Testa, & Major, 1991), whereby a particular negative outcome (e.g., being turned down for a job, not being voted for, getting a bad grade) can be attributed either to one's personal shortcomings or to another person's prejudice. And, as has long been noted, individual differences are most likely to emerge in ambiguous situations because people are most likely to use their preexisting schemas to disambiguate the situation. In a demonstration of this idea, Mendoza-Denton et al. (2009) had women complete an SAT-like analogies task after having been exposed to a room in which their male evaluator's attitudes toward women were made clear through the décor or in which his attitudes were not explicitly communicated. As expected, individual differences in gender-based rejection sensitivity predicted performance following exposure to the ambiguous room but did not predict performance following exposure to either a chauvinist or a progressive room. This example illustrates how expectations of discrimination can indeed affect the perception of subsequent stimuli, but situations matter in that they are differentially open to multiple interpretations. Another way in which situations matter is illustrated well by Butz and Plant through their discussion of how the context interacts with people's internal and external motivations to control prejudice to predict the success of their regulatory efforts (see Figure 1 of their article). As such, Butz and Plant show not only that internal and external motivation to control prejudice are part of the person's CAPS network but also that the network is then related to regulatory success as a function of the situation.

### Conclusions

Efforts to understand the relationship between personality and prejudice have a long and distinguished history (e.g., Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswick, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950; Allport, 1954; see Brown, 1995; Zimbardo, 1970; see also Hong et al., this issue). Our aim in this special section is to take a fresh look at prejudice and racial/ethnic relations from the perspective of CAPS theory. By reviewing four specific research programs that resonate with and specify the general principles set forth by CAPS theory, this special section attempts to shed light on the role that context plays in the expression of personality, the role that race and ethnicity play in the interpretation of context, and the implications of CAPS theory for how we understand both personality and intergroup dynamics. As the articles in this special section make clear, historical and social context matter, CAUs and their interrelationships matter, and situations matter for understanding personality and racial/ethnic relations. We hope these articles encourage interested readers to consider these broad themes vis-à-vis their own research programs as they relate to personality, process, and prejudice.

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