



AMERICAN
PSYCHOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION

ESSENTIAL SCIENCE CONVERSATIONS:

PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENCE EXPLAINS WHY SOME FEEL THREATENED BY EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION INITIATIVES (APRIL 19, 2023)

TRANSCRIPT

Shandol Hoover: Hi, everyone, and welcome. Thank you for joining us today. Please let us know where you're from by saying hello in the chat. I'm Shandol Hoover, APA Science Programs Officer. Today's program is part of an APA essential science conversation where we talk about an open dialogue, about emerging topics in psychological science.

Before we get started, I want to share a few quick announcements. First, many thanks to those of you who submitted question for today's program when you registered. We'll try to get to as many of those questions as possible. You can also ask a question as the program is taking place in real time. There is the Q&A feature on the dashboard. Please enter your questions there. This program is being recorded, so once it ends, everyone who registered will receive an email with a link to the recording. You should receive that email in about two weeks, and we'll also post a link to the recording on our essential science webpage.

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It is free and open to all. Subscribe today and never miss an article, update, or an opportunity to advance psychological science. Let's begin. I'm pleased to introduce Dr. Mitch Prinstein, APA's Chief Science Officer.

Dr. Mitch Prinstein: Hello to everybody. Thank you so much for joining us. I'm very excited for our conversation today, and I wanted to start by thanking everybody for logging in and for joining us in this discussion. I also want to thank so many APA staff who have worked hard to make this event possible, including Shandol Hoover in particular.

I wanted to take a moment, before introducing our panel, to provide a potential frame for our discussion today. I think we have enough data at this point to confirm that making 50% of the public feel blamed, or wrong, or judged, is not working very well.

It's time for us to do less finger pointing and more listening, more understanding of each other. Today, we want this space to be a civil dialogue about science and about the polarization happening in the US regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion practices, policies, and instruction. We can't shy away from this. We have to recognize that the consequences of this polarization are real for members of marginalized communities. Indeed, the FBI reports that hate crimes are on the rise and have been for the past decade. Book bans and legislation about what can be taught about our nation's inspiring and complicated history in K-12 or higher ed are having a chilling effect in our educational

institutions. Of course, nobody wants that. Let's try and understand together today how we got to this point.

The truth of the matter is that, as a society, we're generally not that good at talking about race, gender, sexual orientation, ability, class, or other matters. It's no surprise that there is great trepidation, confusion, and anger out there. It's a skill set that one can learn if they wish, and it's based on psychological science.

Let's have an essential science conversation. I am so thrilled that we have such amazing experts joining us today for this conversation. First, I'd like to introduce Dr. Gerald Higginbotham. Dr. Gerald Higginbotham is an incoming assistant professor at the Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy at the University of Virginia. Employing social and cultural psychological methods, his research investigates the imprint of history on self and social perceptions in the domains of education and politics. Specifically, his research seeks to provide insight into how history functions as an important context that shapes how individuals perceive themselves, others, and policy. His work also provides insight into perceptions of history and its consequences on how they are motivated by an individual's attitudes and group membership. He earned his PhD at UCLA.

I'm also excited to next introduce Dr. Keith Payne, who's a professor of psychology and neuroscience at UNC Chapel Hill. Dr. Payne studies the effects of inequality on human thought and behavior, and how psychological patterns create and reinforce racial and economic disparities. His current research focuses on understanding the role of implicit bias in reflecting and maintaining structural racism. He's the author of the Barack Obama recommended book, *The Broken Ladder: How Inequality Affects the Way We Think, Live, and Die*.

Dr. David Sears received his undergraduate degree in history from Stanford, and his PhD in psychology from Yale. He's been on the faculty at UCLA for many years, serving as Dean of Social Sciences, and currently as a distinguished research professor of psychology and political science. Dr. Sears has served as the president of the International Society of Political Psychology and has received career achievement awards from the Society for Personality and Social Psychology, and from two sections on political psychology and on elections, public opinion, and voting, of the American Political Science Association. He's published books on racial violence, the California tax revolts, intergroup relations on a college campus, the first election of a Black president in America, the politics of multiculturalism, three editions of the *Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology*, and 12 editions of a textbook on social psychology, as well as many articles and chapters.

Last but certainly not least, I'm excited to introduce Dr. Mia Smith-Bynum, who is the Senior Director for Science, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion at the American Psychological Association. Dr. Smith-Bynum's portfolio addresses policies and strategies for ensuring that the research derived by the psychological sciences and human talent that produces this scholarship represents the full breadth of humanity from all walks of life. She's also professor of family science in the School of Public Health at the University of Maryland, College Park. She's the author of *The Theory of Racial Socialization in Action for Black Families*, the co-author of *The Multi-Dimensional Model of Racial Identity* and

The Multi-Dimensional Model of Black Identity. Dr. Smith-Bynum received her PhD in clinical psychology from University of Virginia. Her research has been supported by external grants from several entities, including NIMH and NICHD.

I'm so excited for this panel. Thank you all so much for joining. Feel free to turn on your cameras, Dr. Smith-Bynum and Dr. Sears, and we're going to go ahead and get started. I wanted to start by asking Dr. Sears, I know that you have done some work in symbolic racism theory, and I was wondering if you can talk with us a little bit about what that theory includes and how it might be relevant for the current times that we're in.

Dr. David Sears: Sure. Well, I'm excited to be on this panel, and I want to have a little shout-out to Gerald here, who's-- As Mitch mentioned, I was a history major as an undergraduate. I've never quite shaken that intellectual foundation from my work. I've been pleased over the years as I've known Gerald to see him increasingly work that kind of approach into his own research. It's not very common in psychology to take history into account, but I think particularly for the topic we're discussing here, I think it's essential.

I'd just like to start off by saying that let's recognize that we're dealing with a social problem that is 400 years old. The stigmatization, stereotyping, discrimination against African Americans started with the very first imports from Africa in 1619, as we all know. Even formal equality legislated by the Congress is a very recent phenomenon. We've lived with the stigmatization, discrimination against African Americans for really all of that time in practice, and in theory, only within my adult lifetime has formal equality been extended to African Americans. That stigma has been woven and interwoven into the daily lives of White Americans for all of that time, I would contend. It has resulted in some very powerful, very lasting, and very difficult to eradicate biases against African Americans. I appreciate the concerns of many in the audience about what to do about this, but I have to caution everyone that, in my view, it's something that is-- It's not intractable, but it is very difficult to eradicate. I think part of the problem that we're seeing in this era is we're seeing challenges to even the gains that have been made in the political and legal system. We're seeing the increasing exploitation of those biases by politicians who are ambitious and eager to take power and exercise their own agenda. These biases are passed down from generation to generation. They are among the strongest political attitudes. I speak here now as a political psychologist who's done a lot of empirical work on racism. These predispositions are among the most powerful political predispositions that exist in America today, so there's no easy fix.

I have more I can say, but these things are triggered very-- Just in the last few days, we've seen how easily they're triggered. A young Black man mistakenly goes to the home of an elderly White suburbanite, and boom, it's triggered immediately. Keith has done research on this kind of psychological process. The exploitation of these automatic associations is around us all the time. Today, we see it in things like the backlash against EDI, the backlash against something mysterious called critical race theory that's not widely understood. It penetrates even, I think, into antagonism toward drag queens and transgender, which I would contend has a racial component to it as well. Then symbolic racism is just my take on the form and the content of biases and animus against African Americans in American politics today.

Finally, I just remind everybody, I am a political psychologist. I think these things are intensely political. Politics has been described as a contact sport, so I don't think anybody should be surprised to learn that they take among the most intense political responses in our nation today.

Dr. Prinstein: Thank you. Thank you, Dr. Sears. Dr. Higginbotham, it was only a few years ago after the murder of George Floyd that there was a remarkable change in the conversation about ways to work towards equity, diversity, and inclusion. Now, only a few years later, there seems to be a reversal, at least among some, in the conversation about what is safe and what is an appropriate way to reckon with our history. You and others on this panel have done writing in this area even before George Floyd's murder, predicting and recognizing that this is the way that these conversations tend to go. Can you explain to us from a scientific perspective how we're here and why this was so easily predicted decades ago even?

Dr. Gerald Higginbotham: Thank you for the question. I'm glad to be a part of this panel. In terms of thinking about conversations about race, I always try to remind folks that the ability not to have conversations about race is a privilege. For example, a lot of people of color, in particular, I'm thinking about my experiences as a young Black person, having to have conversations about race as early as starting school. When we talk about when and how we have these conversations and how early, at least being very specific about how many communities have to have these conversations even while they're learning to spell their names and things of that nature. I'll always try to put that. I think as Dr. Sears talked about, there's a long history of not trying to, or not being willing to, or being at least at a mainstream level, threatened by discussing these histories. At a point, like you said, in the summer of 2020, in the protest for Breonna Taylor and George Floyd, in justice for their murders, there was this backlash that could be expected. I think during the time, there was this hope, this feeling that maybe this is a turning point. As you see, that elicited a pretty strong backlash. Again, like you said, it's something that could be expected.

One of the things that play a role into it is there's a strong motivation to, particularly thinking on the context of race, amongst dominant group members, in this case would be White Americans, to feel that the world is just that we've reached this point, that we've had civil rights, we've had a Black president, equality has been reached and there are no differences between racial groups. That's how it should be, and there's strong motivation to do that. These conversations about history, particularly those that challenge that, suggest that even with an election of one person who is not a White male to be president, that these inequities haven't been reached. It challenges some of these very central psychological features that make people feel not just good about the systems that they belong to, but also about themselves and the groups that they belong to. As David mentioned, that these are very psychological processes that are hard to combat because they are central to how we see ourselves. Again, it showed up as you might expect, as a lot of the communities expected during these times. There was a lot of skepticism about, this moment that we're seeing, let's talk about systemic racism and all these things. There was a lot of skepticism like, would that fervor, would that energy be maintained, and also fear of this backlash. We're in that right now, so it's important to acknowledge that. Thanks. It's a great question.

Dr. Prinstein: No, thank you. Dr. Payne, can you take us into the mind of a person who is a loving person in their family, a person who believes that we do need equity, but feels that some of the conversations we're having are somehow threatening or making them feel bad for their own identity as, let's say, a White person? Take us into the mind a little bit. What's happening there from a psychological process?

Dr. Keith Payne: Thank you for the question. Thanks for the opportunity to be here. This conversation about whether it's critical race theory or DEI initiatives and the backlash against that is interesting because the study of critical race theory is essentially the acknowledgment and the study of the way that history and current systems have set up systems of advantages and disadvantages that continue to affect people today and whoever happens to be caught up in those systems. One of the interesting ironies that I see going on right now is that a lot of the political spin around CRT and DEI is painting it as some effort to accuse White Americans of being racists and so forth. I think that is making it appear threatening.

The irony, of course, is that the whole point of systemic racism is that it's about the history and the systems and the structures that have set up lasting structures of disadvantage. It's not about individual attitudes. We know about the history of segregation, for example, and the way that segregated neighborhoods were intentionally created through a combination of housing laws and banking practices throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. That segregated neighborhoods that are still with us create segregated school systems, and that creates unequal educational opportunities for kids just being born today. All of that is under the study of what we call critical race theory. The point being made is that the primary issue here is not individual attitudes and personal beliefs, but the systems of advantages and disadvantages that people start with. I think a lot of the threat that people experience when talking about CRT or DEI initiatives is based in a misunderstanding of what we're talking about here. The mistaken presumption that the playing field is level now, so if we give any attention to increasing equity and inclusion, then we're giving people some unfair advantages, and the lack of acknowledgement that based on these history and systems, the field is not level. There are starting advantages and disadvantages. DEI efforts are basically institutional efforts to combat the problem of systemic racism. I think we get it backwards in our conversations so often, and that's the source of a lot of the threat for people who would like there to be equitable organizations, they would like to have equality in our society. I think there's a lot of factual misunderstanding, some of which is just a lack of knowledge, and some of which, as Professor Sears mentioned, is manufactured for political agendas. I think that makes it hard for people to have a conversation about it.

Dr. Prinstein: Thank you. Dr. Smith-Bynum, let's address those assumptions. Is it a level playing ground now? What is critical race theory? Answer any one of these. This is a lot, but what can we say scientifically to establish these assumptions in objective science?

Dr. Mia Smith-Bynum: I'll just say, I'm so glad to hear the historical perspective embedded and woven into the psych science that we're talking about. I think one of the challenges of our discipline is that we're not necessarily taught to think historically. Particularly, you think about lab research. It's like getting usually undergraduates into a

research lab and doing some type of experimental manipulation and looking at the outcome. All of that work is happening in a moment in time. Historians have documented that at every era in American history, that there have been policies that have been implemented to create these disparities. Whether you're talking about education, treatment under the law, healthcare access, citizenry, the right to vote, that there have been policies to divide folks who live here and turn them against one another. Those policies lead to those disparities, which in turn reflect the narrative around racial and ethnic stereotypes that are deeply embedded in American culture. When we look today and when we see the racial wealth gap, when we see inequities in education in segregated schools that don't have the same tax resources that other communities have, we look and we say, "Oh, those schools, those communities, they just can't get it together. There's no racism. They have all the opportunity," and they don't really think about the redlining policies that led to those inequities. They don't really think about White flight. They don't think about all of these ways that today, our schools are more segregated now, post *Brown v. Board of Education*, than they were in previous years. The patterns fit the narrative of the stereotypes which justifies the continued discrimination. Critical race theory is really about having us to think about the policies and remedying the policies. Part of what's happening with this backlash is that who controls the implementation of policies? You can go state by state, community by community, and look at what's happening there and make a determination as to how representative of those states are, who has access, what voter suppression policies have been put into place, which can freeze us in time such that the issues that Dr. Sears talked about seem to come back around again and again.

Dr. Prinstein: Thanks. Dr. Sears, what is the political motivation underlying this? It sounds like, and please help me to understand, that there's almost a perception of a zero-sum game. Diversity and inclusion means that someone's going to lose something. Is that where the political edge is here?

Dr. Sears: Well, that's part of it. My research has always somewhat downplayed that, and in favor of the idea that it's really more of a moral judgment about the undeservingness of the special attention paid to Blacks and other minorities. I think in the last decade or so, I think we've seen more attention to what Mia is talking about. We've seen more political rhetoric expended on the unfairness to White people of some of these programs that are targeting Blacks and other minorities. I think that's not been the case so much in the past.

It's been more, "They don't deserve it," or as Mia said, "They can't get it together themselves. It's up to them to overcome these disparities and disadvantages." I think the balance between the feeling that people like me are being unfairly treated and people like them shouldn't be given special treatment, I think that balance, we're still figuring that out as political psychologists or as social scientists.

Dr. Prinstein: It's an argument of reverse discrimination as some say, that somehow these policies are systematically disadvantaging people from majority group?

Dr. Sears: Well, that's one argument that we see surfacing. I'd like to add a footnote to what Mia just said about the critical race theory and the idea of systemic racism, the redlining policies of the federal government and local governments, and the urban zoning

decisions of the late 19th and early 20th century that overwhelmingly moved residential zoning into single family housing, which obviously many minorities couldn't afford, away from multi-family housing. Yes, those institutional decisions have their remaining impact today, but don't forget that those institutional decisions were done by politicians who were responding to their constituents. They didn't do it on their own or just because they felt like it, they did it because their constituents were demanding it. That's where I'm loyal to psychology as a discipline, because I think a lot of the story resides in the public, and that is where psychologists are-- That's our home turf.

Dr. Prinstein: Thank you. Dr. Higginbotham, I know one of the things that you've thought about is, in addition to some of the current discussion being rooted in concerns about what someone might lose or a feeling that these conversations might provide abundant advantage to people from minoritized groups, that it also might be the language that's being used as people talk about some of these issues. Do you feel that there's something about the language that people are using in these conversations that is somehow creating more polarization?

Dr. Higginbotham: I think that's a really interesting question. I did want to talk to something that Dr. Sears had brought up in terms of I think generally for this broader conversation, is thinking about understanding these group advantages, or folks who are being disadvantaged now who are maybe part of the majority group. Again, pointing to the need for a broader understanding of history. I think language is as important in this, right, where we talk about certain groups not being deserving of particularly special interests or government acting in behalf to restore some of these inequities, but that's also a use of language, right? We talk about people who like being against social welfare programs in part because, at least psychologically, they associate it with Black people. In terms of language, we also don't think about how social welfare programs have been the base of a lot of the wealth that has helped White Americans be in terms of where they're at, where you think about things like the GI Bill. Think about even things such as like farmer subsidies today as also these farms or social welfare programs, but the language that we use around it isn't the same. I think, again, thinking about understanding this historical trajectory as well as the language that is used is important, particularly to the question I think that you're asking about. For example, CRT. Should experts maybe not use CRT when describing these things? Language matters, obviously, but also too, I think that that might not necessarily get at the underlying motivation. CRT was not something that was this wedge until a few years ago. Most people, unless you were a legal scholar or in these particular grad school programs, even knew what it meant, but it was intentionally made to be this catchall that related to basically anything Black. It feels like talking about not teaching CRT in schools where they're not teaching CRT in K-12 education. When thinking about policing language and thinking about language as the issue, I think that's a slippery slope because different terms can be made to be culturally charged. You think about the term woke. That's been around, at least in the Black community, for decades, if you've been on Black Twitter.

Now it's something that is like we shouldn't be woke and the meaning is lost, and it never was-- It's been usurped. A lot of terms have. I think focusing on language misses the point and it polices using accurate terms to describe what is going on. Again, it's preference,

some people's comfort. Similarly, I'll go back to the point you made earlier, not talking about race in schools. Again, I was six years old when we first heard these conversations with my parents about the police. That wasn't a conversation that we got to get away from, and I turned out fine. Having a conversation about race, it doesn't necessarily have to be threatening. I think the thing is like, what work does that mean that you have to go through and thinking about your positionality to these conversations. I think that's the conversation that needs to be had, because unless we want to continue having these conversations and this polarization decades down the road, we have to talk about this history. We have to talk about the things that have happened in honest ways or else we'll continue having this polarization and conversations that, in reality, really aren't getting to the heart of issues.

Dr. Prinstein: No, thanks. You raise such important points including that it's now-- We're not using any language. We can't even talk about some of these topics anymore or at least they can't be talked about in school. Most people who want to talk about systemic oppression don't feel any desire to make White people feel badly as the goal of that conversation, but it seems that many people who don't want for critical race theory or other related topics to be discussed will say, "I don't want anyone making my child feel bad for being White." This is just a complete disconnect. Dr. Payne, what's happening there? History, psychologically, why do people say, "You're making me feel bad for being White," when no one is saying that that's the goal of discussing critical race theory?

Dr. Payne: As psychologists, we know that there's a big distinction between an objective description of how the events are us and our subjective perception of what we see in that situation and how it makes us feel. A lot is going on psychologically. I think to understand that dynamic, it helps to keep in mind that in our culture there's two dominant narratives around why we have massive racial inequalities. One of them is it falls under this umbrella of systemic racism and understanding that all of these historical processes and policies have created massive inequalities, and that those are handed down generation after generation in a variety of ways and they create the inequalities that we see around us.

The other competing narrative is that it's just about individuals and their own hard work and responsible behavior. If you take that perspective, then you can explain and understand the racial inequalities around us without having to change anything. You can just explain it as Black people not working hard enough, or White people behaving more responsibly. We know from lots of research that the more we are able to learn, the more we educate kids and young people about the history of racism, the more accepting they are, and the more supportive they are of policies that would try to reduce those inequalities. The more people rely on that narrative of individual hard work and responsibility, the less they're supportive of those policies to change inequality, the more they feel, especially as a non-minority person, feel justified in not having to take any responsibility or support any policies for doing that. I think those two causal narratives create this situation in which people look around them and either feel like it reflects, and they have nothing to do with it and no responsibility to make any changes, or they do feel like they're connected to the systems and structures and that motivates a feeling that they should be a part of the solution. Those two different narratives are, of course, highly politicized and they're highly personal, and it's almost impossible to really understand the history and systems approach without also realizing that there's some imperative to do something to reduce inequality. That's exactly

why we see the backlash focused today on not being able to teach about the history of racism in this country.

Dr. Prinstein: If a White person wants to accept the possibility that it's not due to not working hard enough, but it's due to systemic disadvantages, then that White person simultaneously has to accept that maybe their own success is due to systemic advantages, and that's hard to swallow. Is that a fair--

Dr. Payne: Yes. It's hard to swallow as an individual. We have a strong psychological tendency to want to believe that the world is fair and just, and people get what they deserve. There's the part that invokes yourself and your own successes or your own well-being, but then there's also the part that we all want to believe, that we just belong to this just world or a just universe, and how can that be when there are so many inequalities around us? It's just much more comfortable for us to think about individual hard work and success and failure.

Dr. Prinstein: Dr. Smith-Bynum. Oh, sorry. I was just going to ask, we're talking about the concern about White people not feeling bad for being White, but this sounds like it would make Black people feel bad for being Black. Tell me about the flip side.

Dr. Smith-Bynum: I was just thinking, as Dr. Payne was responding, and I was responding to the chat because there are a lot of great questions that are coming in there as well. Talking and teaching about diversity issues read large and we're talking a lot about race and LGBTQ to a lesser extent today, but this conversation is really relevant to the disability community, to folks who are from less privileged social classes, and women. We've not talked a lot about gender. Teaching these topics requires skill and training. One takeaway and why I'm really excited to see the signups online for this is that DEI or diversity, equity, and inclusion matters have become professionalized in the last 10 to 15 years. I still remember when I heard a campus president mention that term and I thought, "Oh, that's really, really cool." Now there's a whole industry around it to help organizations get on board and to modernize their professional workplaces, their classrooms, so on and so forth. When Black history, for example, has been taught in schools, sometimes people would have these slave options where they'd have White students be the slave owners and Black students be the slaves. That's teaching Black history, but no one is happy about those occurrences, and they're still happening. I see Dr. Gerald laughing. This requires skill. No one can just jump into the arena and expect to be effective. When I've taught intersectionality to my students in the past, and I had two years of training through a fellowship before I did it, the reaction was empathy. Not self-hate, not feeling guilty or bad. I think that even the term guilty is a bit of an oversimplification that if we're taught the soaring narrative that is the life in the United States, life of your pursuit of happiness, you work hard, you can be a success, you can grab that brass ring, as an American, I find that appealing, and people all over the world do as well. At the same time, teaching people that critical thinking about how to understand our country so that we can be active and participating citizens in our communities, and raise the young people in our lives to be prepared to deal with this complicated world, that means being able to deal with people from different backgrounds, from different religions, from different genders, sexual orientations. That is a skill set for entering the professional workplace. It's jarred because

it's new. In 1985, you didn't necessarily need those skills, but if you look at the demographic data in terms of how the country is changing, the increased visibility of communities that are still marginalized, but you can find movies, you can find a podcast, you can find those communities online. That's helped people get together, and when people get together, they advocate. Now we all have to deal with that, and we have to get trained. Just a quick, quick plug, the Science Directorate is working on some programming to help people get onboarded. We're a few months off from that but watch this space because we recognize that there's a hunger for knowledge out there.

Dr. Prinstein: Thank you.

Dr. Higginbotham: Can I follow up on Dr. Smith's final point?

Dr. Prinstein: Please. Absolutely.

Dr. Higginbotham: The reason why I smile when you're talking about how history has been taught generally, we often don't go back. We talk about like, oh, there's a reactance to talking about certain histories in classrooms now. We're not discussing how they're either not talked about or have been poorly talked about in the past in terms of, again, whose comfort has been prioritized in our current conversations. You could imagine, as a Black student in that particular classroom, that couldn't have been a positive experience. Also, to the point of thinking about, I wish there's more conversation about how not having representation in school curriculum impacts those folks who are left out. Different racial identities, different gender identities, sexual orientation, disability, and different abilities. Thinking about the impacts of actually inclusive spaces for these students in terms of thinking about how much they feel like they belong, their achievement. Again, building this multicultural society and widely defined as being an important goal, at least that the US has said or espoused to value. I think we talk about what is the added aspect and how that can harm certain groups of children, but what is also leaving that out? What is the absence of that and how has that not allowed folks to see themselves in these academic spaces for decades? I think that's an important aspect of the conversation that should also be given weight, and that often isn't in mainstream discussions.

Dr. Prinstein: Thank you. We have many, many fascinating and important questions, and I want to make sure we get a chance to get to these. Thank you for highlighting that historically and politically, these are deeply entrenched issues and they are hard to change. Nevertheless, I believe there are many people who have the will and the desire to do what they can to change and some of these questions are coming in that spirit. Here's one. How do you approach folks who think that having the conversation at all is the problem? How do you begin to have a meaningful conversation with folks who seem to not want to engage in the dialogue at all? I'll just open that up for anybody. Yes. Please.

Dr. Sears: Let me start off. I think the underlying fear there is that the people who are going to do the teaching are people like us. Mia spoke about her own training. I think if the opponents of teaching of CRT, even if it's hypothetical and for third graders, because third graders are never taught CRT or diversity, equity, and inclusion. If they thought that people like them were doing the teaching, they feel a lot more comfortable with it, but they

don't. I think they assume it's going to be done by people who are going to pull up the rock and here's all the racism underneath that rock, and that's what the kids are going to be taught. I was reminded a couple of minutes ago of a book that I did a book review of a few years ago. It was a guy who had done a study of a White working-class neighborhood in London, England, economically deteriorated neighborhood, because of the industrialization. The local factory had moved out. What he found to his surprise, I guess, was that there was a lot of racial concern, a lot of immigrants from people of color coming into England, coming into that neighborhood of London. He devoted an entire page of his book to direct quotes from the respondents he talked to, each of whom said, "I am not a racist." He didn't ask anybody if they were racist or not. Talking about that neighborhood and the changes in that neighborhood made them all feel very sensitive to that accusation, and they all said explicitly, "I am not a racist." I thought that was quite revealing. I think that's part of some things that people are not talking about as Gerald says.

Dr. Prinstein: Any reactions to that? I think it's a good illustration of--

Dr. Payne: Just to respond to what Professor Sears was saying, people are very afraid in my experience. I've led a number of workshops around implicit bias and diversity, and I teach courses about it. At the beginning, there's a lot of palpable fear that something in that workshop or a class is going to accuse people of being racist or somehow imply or make them feel as if they're racist. This past year, I taught my psychology of racism and discrimination class. I completely revamped it because I felt like we couldn't talk about the psychology of racism in 2023 the way we talked about it in 2019 anymore. That we have to acknowledge systemic racism more and talk about how it relates to individual attitudes and beliefs. For the first whole third of that class, we talk about history. We read a book by the historian Eric Foner about the history of reconstruction and how that affected the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments, and so on. Then we spend the rest of the semester unpacking how that history creates the conditions for the inequalities we see around us, but also the social and political attitudes that people have as they try to make sense of those inequalities.

It takes time to unpack the history and the policy before you get to anything that has to do with individual psychology in order for people to feel safe even having that conversation. I think one way to do that is to just start by talking about the science. Start by talking about the history, and over time people can come to see how that has the implications that it does for current day inequality.

Dr. Prinstein: There are many questions with people interested in learning about a way forward, people in their companies who are trying to promote DEI or EDI attitudes in their company, people in rural America, people who are students that want to be able to say something to the folks in their departments who have a higher academic rank, people who want to be able to talk about this in their schools. Any further thoughts about the best way to address these psychological barriers, to acknowledge them, to call them out or not based on what we understand psychologically about some of the areas of resistance? What would you recommend is the best way to label or not label them and discuss them overtly or not discuss those barriers overtly?

Dr. Smith-Bynum: I'll say speaking as a woman of color working in different academic institutions over the years, I think we have to acknowledge that there's a real risk for members of minoritized communities to speak out. When we talk about this, we can't divorce it from systems of power. In thinking about that, if you're the leader of an organization, you've got to get the buy-in and you want to pay attention to those folks who may be resistant and reach out to them, listen to them and hear their concerns, because those folks can disrupt positive efforts. For folks who are members of minoritized communities, unfortunately, more than unlikely, you may not be in a position of power, or even if you are, it can maybe be compromised by your member in a marginalized group. You have to think strategically throughout where you can find allies in that conversation. Then as our panelists have shared, a lot of this work, unfortunately, is incremental. For students, you may be in that place for a short time. The kinds of changes that you can expect may not be seen until after you leave that institution. We've got to be very clear and blunt about that.

If you're a longer serving staff member, employee of a given institution, find those allies and those levers of power. One thing we haven't really talked about a whole lot is the intersectionality and access to power. When you have power in an organization, whether that's symbolic or embedded in a title, you can shape how different policies and practices unfold. For my young professionals and students, you've got to find where those sympathetic levers of power are, and partner with them to think strategically about it.

The other thing I will say is, some places are toxic. When possible, exit the institution because it's not worth your health or your mental health. I see Dr. David is laughing that. You have to go to places that are going to be welcoming of change. They may not always have the solutions, but if you've got a good listening ear and someone whose instincts are to do the right thing, that is often where we have to start.

Dr. Prinstein: With just a minute or two to go, several questions about White fragility and whether there are ways to address White fragility. White people are very, very scared about being called racist. Sometimes, ironically, that leads to more bad behavior than helpful behavior. Any quick thoughts or comments about White fragility?

Dr. Sears: I just would say one thing about that, which is building off the anecdote that I mentioned a couple minutes ago about the guy who found all of his respondents were saying, "I am not a racist." In a way, that's a positive sign because of how bad it is to be called a racist or to think of yourself as a racist. That has to be a positive development. If you think back to Thomas Jefferson and those people who owned slaves, we've come a long way. Maybe it's not so pleasant, and we have a long way to go, but maybe that's something. I don't know.

Dr. Prinstein: Other final thoughts or comments?

Dr. Sears: I'd add one last thing that, the good news for me over the past few years is what I see as a real sea change among the White students in our universities. They're hearing the message that a lot of people don't want them to even be exposed to, and they're buying it. We're seeing that cleavage, that polarization, as Gerald put it, between the college educated

and the less than college educated Whites. There is a political polarization. A lot of it has to do with race. At least we're seeing a lot more acceptance among White students and recent White college graduates of the kinds of messages that we've been talking about here.

Dr. Smith-Bynum: I just want to pick up on a comment from Dr. Sears about, it's better to be a racist than actually be called one. This gets to the skill set that we're talking about of, how do you have conversations with people whose backgrounds are different than yours in 2023, as we face an increasingly diverse US population? By 2044, there will be no single racial and ethnic majority in the United States. It's imperative that we get a handle on these matters, LGBTQ, religious bigotry, so on and so forth.

On a hopeful note, when the young student got shot because he went to the wrong home to pick up his younger brothers, the walkout of 1,500 of his schoolmates in support of him, that was a very positive thing. I think it speaks to the changes that we as a psych science can foster in the younger generation.

Dr. Prinstein: This is incredibly hard work to do and a very hard conversation for many to have. I want to thank our panelists very much for participating in this discussion and providing so much wisdom and history. We will be putting this video up online for others to access, including a transcript, and including any relevant readings that are recommended from our panelists, so you can continue thinking about these topics. We encourage you to use this video to begin and continue conversations in your department or in your community or in your business.

Please show this video as a conversation starter and keep the conversation going where you are now. Thank you so much to Drs. Higginbotham, Sears, Payne, and Smith-Bynum. Thank you so much to everyone for attending. Don't forget to subscribe to *Science Spotlight* to learn about our upcoming conversations and resources for scientists. Thank you to all the staff who helped to make this event happen. Have a good rest of your day.