



State of the Research - 2023

SPSP is committed to advancing the science, teaching, and application of personality and social psychology for the benefit of all people.

The following resource, developed by the SPSP Advocacy Advisory Board, presents compelling research related to SPSP's advocacy priority areas, including recommendations for applying these findings to address social challenges.

Addressing systemic racism and advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion

- Organizations can maximize the effectiveness of anti-bias training by including training as part of a broader diversity and inclusion strategy, focusing on the awareness of bias and changing behavior, facing discomfort as an important part of the learning process, and highlighting two or three concrete strategies which attendees can use to manage their bias. ([Anicich et al., 2021](#))
- When asked to place residents in a fictional city, White people were likely to self-segregate. This teaches us that efforts to dismantle societal racism must minimize the influence of individual choices, which often create and maintain segregation. ([Carter et al., 2020](#))
- Previous research has shown that teachers have lower expectations for low-income and minority students and are less likely to refer them to gifted and talented education programs. Policymakers can address this by implementing universal gifted screening in school systems, minimizing the influence of teacher bias and boosting representation of low-income and minority students. ([Lewis, 2023](#))
- A brief, low-cost intervention could help level the playing field for students from historically marginalized groups. The intervention involves a reading-and-writing activity that emphasizes how worries about fitting in, struggling in class, and feeling homesick during the college transition are common and improve over time. The intervention increased the rate at which students from these groups completed their first year of college - a major step towards reducing inequality in educational attainment. ([Walton et al., 2023](#))



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Battling the disinformation epidemic

- Playing a fake news game called Bad News can “inoculate” people from fake news in the future by boosting their confidence in identifying false information online and making them less likely to share misinformation in their networks. (Roozenbeek & van der Linden, 2019)
- People are more effective at discerning true and false headlines when they are offered financial or nonfinancial incentives. Conversely, incentivizing social goals (i.e. getting more likes on social media) decreased people’s ability to discern between true and false headlines. (Rathje et al., 2023)
- Efforts to correct scientific misinformation are more successful when the misinformation is non-politicized and not related to health. (Chan & Albarracin, 2023)

Promoting societal health and well-being

- Over-confidence in one’s COVID-19 knowledge is associated with less concern about COVID-19. Altogether, studies indicate that reducing one’s over-confidence in their COVID-19 knowledge can increase concern about COVID-19, which is associated with more preventive behaviors. (Piehlmaier et al., 2023)
- A meta-analysis of 71 studies explored the influence of monetary incentives and nonfinancial interventions (e.g., providing information) on COVID-19 vaccination. Nonfinancial interventions and financial incentives had a small effect on COVID-19 vaccinations. There was no significant difference between the effect of nonfinancial interventions and monetary incentives. (Huang et al., 2023)
- Researchers systematically reviewed adverse health outcomes among racial/ethnic minoritized groups and area-level racial prejudice. A review of 14,632 resulted in 14 articles meeting the criteria for inclusion. All 14 studies indicated a positive association between area-level racial prejudice and problematic health outcomes—four of these studies identified similar relationships among Whites. The authors recommend increased methodological and theoretical rigor in this area of scholarship. (Michaels et al., 2022)



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Promoting sustainable behavior and pro-environmental action

- People are more likely to change their behavior if they are presented with information about how other people's behavior is changing over time. This is known as "dynamic norms," and it can be used to motivate people to change their behavior in a variety of areas, such as taking personal pro-environmental actions. (Sparkman & Walton, 2017)
- Emphasizing the cost-savings of renewable energy is an effective way to build enduring bipartisan support for environmentally-friendly technology. (Gustafson et al., 2022)
- Writing tasks that focus attention on the future risks of climate change for people's children and grandchildren can make people more likely to donate to efforts to fight climate change. (Shrum, 2021)

Tackling ideological polarization

- Correcting harmful misconceptions and highlighting commonalities with members of other political parties can help change minds, build dialogue skills, and improve relationships between parties. (Hartman et al., 2022)
- Relaying personal experiences is more effective (and more believed) than facts at fostering respect between political and moral opponents. (Kubin et al., 2021)
- Observing warm interactions between leaders of different political parties is a reliable way to reduce polarization. (Voelkel et al., 2023)